


—●— THE —●—
COMING DAY

OSCAR L. JOSEPH

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THE COMING DAY
OSCAR L. JOSEPH

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THE COMING DAY

BY

OSCAR L. JOSEPH

AUTHOR OF "ESSENTIALS OF EVANGELISM,"
"THE FAITH AND THE FELLOWSHIP," ETC.

*"What whispers are these, O lands, running ahead of you,
passing under the seas?*

*Are all nations communing? Is there going to be but one
heart to the globe?*

*Is humanity forming en masse? For lo, tyrants tremble,
crowns grow dim,*

The earth restored, confronts a new era."

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TO
G. H. D.
WHO
SUGGESTED THE SUBJECT
AND
ENCOURAGED ME TO WRITE
THIS BOOK

PREFACE

THE war has given a needed shock to much of our conventional religious thought and practice. The pressure of circumstances is urging us to re-examine our foundations. We find that our outlook was too narrow and that we did not have a well rounded philosophy of life, capable of meeting and mastering difficulties as they challenged us. The vital questions of God and immortality really occupied the outer fringe of our considerations, and, in spite of our professions to the contrary, we were really absorbed in the interests and concerns of the passing moment. Letters from the Front have startled us with the inadequacy of our Christian convictions, if they have not also convicted us of building on the sand, without definite purpose and plan. We are thus compelled to find out what are the fundamentals of Christianity, and whether they are sufficient for the present overwhelming emergency. I began the studies in this volume with much misgiving, but was gratified that those who listened to my pulpit discussions of these themes expressed

their gratitude for the new light given to their own problems. It is my hope that in their present form they may appeal to a larger public, and help to clarify thought, confirm faith and constrain to larger efforts for the worldwide supremacy of Jesus Christ.

O. L. J.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE END OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER ONE

THE END OF THE WORLD

EARNEST people have always tried to stampede God into showing himself and manifesting his power according to their own ideas. They have invariably discovered that they were kicking against the pricks. Their conception of history is like the pendulum which goes forward and backward and then suddenly stops. They have failed to see that there has been continual progress through the centuries and that it has been punctuated by disruption and disturbance, conflict and upheaval, sacrifice and desolation. At times the existing order of society was upturned or even destroyed, but the resulting adjustments looked towards healthier advance:

“On, to the bounds of the waste,
On, to the City of God.”

It is the forward look of the Bible which has encouraged seer and saint to believe that the golden age is in the future. Whatever may be

the present depressing conditions, the better day was on the way. They thus endured scorn and privation, convinced that the good seed of justice, truth and love must bear a golden harvest to bless unborn generations. These loyal spirits felt at times that the end of evil was near at hand. It was only one of those happy "illusions that are sent from heaven." It is in some respects like the mirage in the wilderness which encourages the weary traveller to journey on in the hope that he would soon reach the place of water and palms. The early Christians believed that the day of deliverance and triumph was near at hand, and under the influence of this belief they were urgent in their activities. Most of them, however, did not have the widening perspective of history and so they could not distinguish between the incidental features of our Lord's utterances and what was essential and permanent. When he declared to his apostles: "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man come," he had in mind the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. When he later told them: "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations: and then shall the end come," he gave them to understand that many years would pass before the climax. This thought is further

emphasised in the great commission to "make disciples of all the nations."* He gave them "a large program to occupy their minds and keep them from thinking too much of the coming catastrophe."†

There are two Greek words which are translated world but which have different meanings. One word is *αἰών*, which means long life or a cycle of time, and refers more particularly to the present age. The other word is *κόσμος* that is the universe, the world as the sum total of created beings. Like *αἰών* it also is at times used in a bad sense to refer to the world of evil as separated from God and defiant of him. The scientist tells us that the antiquity of the world must be reckoned in millions and tens of millions of years, and that the story of the earth is one of development towards more perfect forms of life. It might come to an end in one of two ways: either by the slow process of intensifying cold through the failure of the sun, when the struggle for sustenance and life will be marked by incredible savageries: or the end might come by the collision of our planet with some other member of the solar system, when fires would burst forth from the bowels of the earth, "and the elements shall be dis-

* Matt. 10:23; 24:14; 28:19 f.

† A. B. Bruce.

solved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”* All nations and religions have theories concerning the ages of the world. The Babylonians regulated the cycles of time by the courses of the planets. They held that the consummation will be reached after a decisive struggle between the powers of light and of darkness; and the account was set forth with a wealth of mythological description. The Buddhist philosophers thought of the world in terms of cosmic periods which were alternated by destruction and renovation. Each period or *kalpa* would be heralded by the appearance of a Buddha. These and other pagan theories place the golden age in the past. The Christian view looks forward to the good time coming, and maintains that the era of blessedness could be reached only by a continuous ascent up the hill of troublous and distracted life, until we finally arrive at the glory-crowned summit, where God shall be all and in all. Evolution teaches us that the vegetable kingdom is succeeded by the animal kingdom, and that by the kingdom of man. We go further and posit as its successor the Kingdom of God, which is composed of the redeemed of every age and clime.

The history of the world is generally divided

* 2 Peter 3:10.

into three periods or ages. The first is referred to as ancient history and extends to the middle of the fourth century A.D.; the second is known as mediæval history, from about 375 to 1453; and the third is called modern history, from the fall of Constantinople to the present day. This division is only a matter of convenience, for features which have characterised one period are also seen in the other two. It would be difficult to divide the history of the world, even beginning with the Christian era, according to moral and spiritual standards. There is, however, a sense in which the world ends and begins anew. All life is a series of endings and beginnings, which follow logically and chronologically. It consists, as Bergson would say, not in arriving but in constantly becoming. The student who comes to his commencement graduates from the school of preparation into the larger school of service. One chapter closes and another opens: but what is to be written in the new chapter depends in no small measure on what is contained in the preceding chapter. In like manner a new age dawns at the fulness of the times and wrests the scepter from the old age, which has exhausted its strength and energy and has lost its powers of rejuvenescence. Whether the new is to be better than the old is conditioned on its program of recon-

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struction, with its promise of nobler attainment and more humane achievement. But the new does not come automatically. It is "racked with birth-pangs" and accompanied by intense sufferings and severe sacrifices. The old does not readily leave its entrenchments and surrender its vested privileges, without a bitter and desolating struggle to the finish. Any attempt at compromise means that the conflict must be renewed at a future time. For instance, the leaders of the Protestant Reformation did not think through to their conclusions, with the result that the principles of religious liberty, political equality, and social fraternity came up for bloody consideration at the French Revolution and the American Revolution. The question was not even then adequately settled because the matter was left in the hands of diplomats with short-range vision, whose patchwork terms of settlement showed considerations of selfish profit rather than of disinterested principle. Europe thus continued to be an armed encampment, until finally the bloated Teuton with his dream of a Continental empire and world domination determined to make a sudden swoop and lay his talons on his neighbors. While the other nations were contemplating international peace, the Prussian megalomaniacs were planning with fiendish brutality to secure

a "place in the sun." It is needless to recount the history of these four gruesome years, except to state that Germany's infamous attempt to terrorize the world and to subjugate it at the point of the sword has failed, as every policy of brutal force and bullying threat has failed, from the days of Julius Cæsar to Napoleon. The war has thrust upon us a moral issue of great significance: whether power and selfishness represented by the scourge of militarism and the menace of autocracy is to continue to hold its Damocles sword over the destiny of free peoples; or whether the sacred principles of freedom are to be allowed to inspire the human race in its further advances toward the City of God, the habitation of the elect souls of all ages. In the words of the eminent jurist, Charles E. Hughes: "The question in the final analysis is whether force shall be the master of men or the servant of the spirit of justice that is within men." This vital issue is now being determined at infinite cost, and it will finally be settled when the nations come together to deliberate the terms of peace, by which to be guided in the new era.

Although man has breathed the poisonous atmosphere of war from time immemorial, we cannot say that war is his native element. It has been made necessary because of man's stu-

pidity and cupidity, and because of his delusion that might is right. As we consider the history of the world, it must be conceded that the sacrifice of untold millions of precious lives to the god of war is nothing short of a crime against humanity and that the aggressors are guilty of inexcusable and unpardonable misdeemeanours. When Jesus said, "I came not to send peace but a sword," he meant that there are some circumstances when war becomes inevitable. When he further declared, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," he implied that the price in destruction and desolation is always excessive.* As H. G. Wells so well put it: "In the trenches of France and Flanders and on the battlefields of Russia, the Germans have been spending and making the world spend the comfort, the luxury and the progress of the next quarter-century."† We are therefore convinced that this war is sealing the doom of militarism, and that out of the carnage there will come a new world. The deliberate disgust of war will further make it impossible for any repetition of this diabolical process in the settlement of differences. The outlook of the world cannot be the same as it was before August, 1914. "The main objec-

* Matt. 10:34; 26:52.

† Wells: *What is Coming*, p. 7.

tion to the *status quo ante* is that it is more than a mere territorial arrangement. It is a state of world society and a state of mind. To re-establish it means to return to the execrable conditions existing in Austria-Hungary and Turkey before the war. It means a recrudescence of ancient embittered hostilities in the Balkans and an accentuation of the old colonial strife between imperialistic powers. It would reawaken old jealousies and hatreds and revive the old insecurity.'''* When the final decision is arrived at, it must be in favour of the ideal of a federation of nations, large and small, working in a spirit of co-operation for one another's welfare, when differences will be settled as they arise, by the rational procedure of arbitration. We are furthermore confident that the reactions of this war will accomplish far deeper results than those contemplated by its criminal instigators. Their fell purpose will thus be defeated and a new era open for the world, when the arts and crafts of peace will be stronger than the nefarious plots of provincial autocrats.

We hold no brief for war and yet we cannot avoid recognising the beneficial compensations which may be regarded as its aftermath. The battles of Marathon (B.C. 490) and Salamis

* Weyl: *The End of the War*, p. 215.

(B.C. 480) brought victory to the Greeks over the Asiatic hordes from Persia and saved liberty for Europe and the world. When Jerusalem fell before the Roman army in A.D. 70 it seemed as though the cause of religion had received a fatal blow, but instead this catastrophe released the Christian forces for a world-wide propaganda. At the close of the fourth century when the Eternal City was stormed and sacked by the Vandal invaders, many a soul was dispirited and Christianity was charged with being the cause of all the miseries. Augustine then wrote his *De Civitate Dei* in defence of the faith, but even he did not realise that a richer civilisation would arise out of the wreckage. In the thirteenth century the peasantry of the Alpine valleys resisted the feudal tyranny of the Austrian dukes and out of it came the vigorous Swiss Republic, which has been a veritable haven of refuge to the oppressed from all nations. The famous battle of Bannockburn, 1314, scored a victory for Robert Bruce and his valiant Highlanders over Edward II of England, resulting in a mighty Scotch nation. The fifteenth century saw the fall of Constantinople before the Turks, 1453, and it seemed as though the end of the world had come, when this great stronghold of Western civilisation passed into the control of the

barbarian. But this event was the prelude to the ending of the dark ages. Greek scholars fled to the universities of Western Europe, taking with them their priceless manuscripts. Then began the Renaissance or Revival of learning which enabled Erasmus to produce his edition of the Greek New Testament, and which was also the opening wedge for the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Democracy began to make itself heard at this period, but it was a muffled voice, for the conditions were not yet propitious to give it an intelligent and hearty welcome. The seventeenth century was busy with theological controversy. The Thirty Years' War ended with the peace of Westphalia, 1648, which recognised the territorial limitations of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. In the eighteenth century tyrants everywhere began to feel the foundations shake and to see the handwriting on the wall, although they did not heed the fiery warnings. The French Revolution was the protest of the proletariat against the class privileges of king, aristocracy and clergy. The American Revolution was the assertion by the colonists of the rights of self-government which they contended must not be withheld from any people who are "created equal" and who are entitled to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." These struggles

were soon followed by the Evangelical Revival under the Wesleys, and by the Foreign Missionary enterprise, with William Carey and Thomas Coke among the pioneers. The nineteenth century opened with the tragic attempt of Napoleon to realise his insane dream of world-empire. The lesson of his miserable failure has been lost on his Teutonic successors, whose dense stupidity and egregious conceit, fed by Junkerism, militarism and nationalism, precipitated "the most ghastly of all human tragedies," for which Nemesis will yet compel them to pay unto the uttermost farthing. The last century was also marked by the struggle between vested privileges and popular rights, between slavery and freedom, and this issue was fought out by our Civil War. We thus see that at each crisis the principle of human freedom received added emphasis. The valour of the past thus summons us to increased devotion, to make the bounds of freedom wider yet, until every tribe and nation shall enjoy its unique benefits and enthrone Christ as King of kings, to the glory of God the Father.

The battle of the Marne at the beginning of the war takes rank with the world's greatest decisive battles, like Marathon and Waterloo. This signal victory drove back the Teuton ad-

vance in the first flush of its overweening confidence that Europe could easily be laid at their clumsy feet, begging for mercy. "The moral effect of the battle of the Marne was even greater than its material gains. . . . Apart from the losses, the mere fact that a great German army had been hustled across thirty miles of country, had been driven from river to river, and had finally to take refuge in trenches in order to hold their ground, was a great encouragement to the Allies. . . . The battle must also be regarded as a fixed point in military history, since it was the first time since the days of the great Napoleon that a Prussian army had been turned and driven."* It was furthermore a divine pledge to the Allies of ultimate victory over the tyrant. There has been more than one Providential intervention since that notable event. The German genius and subtlety have been exceeded only by their cunning and duplicity: but they have been checkmated by the sheer obsession of the Teutonic mind which blundered at strategic points, through inability to understand human nature. Their elaborate spy system, their subtle intrigues, their subterranean propaganda among the nations, really conspired against themselves. "In the net

* A. Conan Doyle: *A History of the Great War*, Vol. I, p. 161 f.

which they hid" for others, their own foot has been taken; for just as they were reaching their coveted goal, a fatal Nemesis over-reached their demonic attempts and defeated them. They may continue to bring up their reserves: they may hold Russia by the throat as in a vise: they may dominate Central Europe. Let us grant this for the sake of argument, though we do not believe that they will be allowed to exercise despotic sway over an inch of ground. But even if they do, they will be shut out of the world's best treasures and have to eat their heart in defeat, until they come to a different mind, repent in sackcloth and ashes for being the Ishmael among the nations, and give solid proof that they have dethroned the lustful gods who misled them to work desolation on themselves and throughout the face of the earth. The insufferable rudeness of the German and his "bullying insolence" had justly earned for him the detestation of the whole world even before the war. "It is this spirit of arrogant provincialism, organising with perverse ingenuity its laboriously gathered facts, which has given Germany a diplomacy without finesse, a knowledge without insight, a cleverness without wisdom, and a might without dominion. Germany needs seaports and colonies and broad do-

mains, but most of all she needs a change of heart.” *

It has been eagerly asked why God does not stop this war. In all reverence, let us say that he cannot do it. The universe is governed by moral laws which make for righteousness. Man is a free agent and he must take the initiative of his own will to obey these laws. If there is a let-up at this stage, or if there had been at any point, after the war assumed serious proportions, not only would the sacrifices made have counted for nought, but the principle of justice would also be violated. Intervention would mean compromise with a nation which has flouted all treaty obligations, when it was so minded, and whose leading statesmen have publicly declared that all compacts with nations are but scraps of paper. To come to terms with such criminals would make us guilty of the godless art of camouflage, which has been well defined as “humbugging disguise.” If we expect God to come to our rescue, we must maintain at any cost the eternal truth that “righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” God will then “lay bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations,” as he has repeatedly done, so that the tides might be turned in favour of godliness, justice, honour

* Powers: *America Among the Nations*, p. 357.

and goodness. Whoever reads the history of the world can see that war has not been ordained of God; and that the appeals of prophets and apostles all through the ages have been in the interest of fraternal living. War is the blighting harvest of secret diplomacy, which is morally a bankrupt system. "What could be more brutally cynical than the plots of statesmen to occupy a territory or to ruin an ally, as though the world were a chessboard and the nations pawns in a great game? What essential difference is there between the negotiations of diplomats to despoil a neighbouring Kingdom and the plans of burglars to rob a bank?"* The irony of this situation is very patent to any one who would read "The Collected Diplomatic Documents Relating to the Outbreak of the European War." If we read next the none too severe indictment in *I Accuse!* by A German, and then turn to the sequel by this anonymous author, entitled *The Crime*, we can understand what he means when he writes that in the steps taken by Germany and Austria in the critical days, we are "face to face either with irresponsible levity or with the criminal will, either negligence in the highest degree, which the juridical doctrine of bygone days described

* F. G. Peabody: *The Christian Life in the Modern World*, p. 163.

as 'recklessness,' and as such placed on the same footing as the evil intention, or the evil intention itself, the conscious and intentional misdeed." * Finally summon as witnesses the decimated populations of Belgium, France, and Armenia, and recall the wanton destruction of property, including works of art and architecture dedicated to religion, learning and civilisation. We can then see that any question about God interfering is due to a misconception of the character of God.

The entrance of the United States into this war was not due to any philanthropic motives. We may have different opinions as to the delay, whether it was right or otherwise, but the final step was taken on Good Friday of 1917 (April 6) as the emphatic answer of our aroused conscience to the ruthless submarine warfare, which was a boisterous challenge to a freedom-loving people. We truly love peace but we place human rights and honour above peace, for without self-respect, the peace of an individual or of a nation is a form of cowardice and disgrace. In his address to Congress, stating the war aims and peace terms of the United States, President Wilson said: "We entered this war because violations of right had occurred which touched us to the quick and made the life of our own

* *The Crime*, p. 262 f.

people impossible, unless they were corrected and the world secure once for all against their recurrence. What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world, as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us.”* It were presumptuous to consider in this place questions which belong to prophetic statesmen like our own President and David Lloyd George.† We are satisfied to leave the matter in their competent hands in the firm confidence that the ideals of nationalism and internationalism will be interpreted in terms of fraternalism, so that the new social order will be one of co-operation and not of exploitation and competition. The law of the jungle which belongs to the tiger and ape stage must be left behind, and the law of the family must be ac-

* President Wilson: *State Papers and Addresses*, p. 467 f.

† *The Great Crusade* by Lloyd George is one of the noblest expositions of militant and triumphant democracy.

cepted by all the nations. They must further see to it that provision is made for the citizenship to be educated and trained so as to appreciate and adopt the principles of brotherhood and to use their goodly heritage for the weal and well-being of one and all. True democracy does not rely on the voice of the mere majority but of the enlightened and responsible majority. Its voice, like the voice of the Christianised conscience, must enable all mankind to hear the evangel which proclaims the supreme worth of those spiritual truths concerning the Fatherhood of God, the Saviourhood of Jesus Christ and the Brotherhood of the whole race. "There is just one safeguard of democracy and that is to keep the good people awake and at the task all the time. Some instruments are better and others worse, but the instrument never does the work, it is the hand and brain that wield it." * As we thus unite the nations in a common purpose for the whole race, we shall be able to see the steady realisation of the plan of God, when the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

At every period of bitter struggle when the fate of nations was hanging in the balance, there have been predictions that the end of the world was at hand. But these hysteric utterances

* E. H. Griggs: *The Soul of Democracy*, p. 105.

were soon silenced by the criticism and contradictions of events. These prognosticators failed to distinguish between the symbolical and the literal speech of Jesus, the prophets and the apocalyptists, including the seer of Patmos. Their failure has been partly due to a strange ignorance of the history of the world. Prophecy is not history written beforehand, but the declaration of eternal principles with applications to contemporary needs. Those who insist that the present war was predicted in the Bible treat the sacred volume as a book of hieroglyphics instead of a record which sets forth the progressive revelation of the redemptive purpose of God. If war is due to cut-throat competition then the prophets foretold its certain coming. In like manner they announced the arrival of peace, when nations "shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks." But nothing was localised or particularised so far as unborn generations were concerned. One great truth which this war is teaching relates to "the inviolable rights of peoples and mankind," that is, of the smaller as well as of the larger nations. We will come out of this furnace to recognise that Orientals and Occidentals are members of a cosmopolitan fraternity. The more highly favoured nations of the world will learn to share their privileges

with those who are less fortunate. The stronger will not take advantage of the weaker on any plea whatsoever; for the judgment and condemnation of the rest of the civilised world which belongs to this league of peoples will be so decidedly pronounced that the aggressor will promptly desist rather than run amuck to his own despoiling.

Jesus never despaired of humanity. He regarded all peoples as capable of responding to the best and as entitled to encouragement, in order that they might realise their immortal destiny under the most advantageous circumstances. But this blessed truth has not yet been taken seriously even by the Christian church; it is partly due to this lack of vision that the church has failed to impress its message on the nations. Every declaration of fraternity has been modified or neutralised by provincial prejudice or sectarian bigotry. Members of the church have had the idea that they were an elect company, the particular preserves of the Almighty, and they have gathered their skirts about them in Pharisaical fashion, as they looked with withering scorn on the publican-outsider, whom they consigned to unescapable disaster. Church leaders have been more concerned with ecclesiastical prerogatives than with spiritual privileges and duties. Where such an

imperialistic spirit has been dominant any thought of democracy was simply out of the question. All attempts at Christian union and unity have also been stoutly resisted.* To be sure, the churches have been busy in carrying relief and in assuaging pain; but we should have turned off the spigot of selfishness instead of mopping up the floor after the wretched mess has been made. Will the church take warning and so plan for the coming day of righteousness and blessedness? Now is the time to get ready for the salvation of to-morrow. "The church was not meant to be the cult of an outworn creed but the fountain of world ideas; not the conservator of things as they were, but the irrepressible campaigner of things as they ought to be; not the dealer in dull narcotics that numb the pains of new thinking and soothe the nation with peace, peace, when there is no peace, but the resistless dynamic of a new life that will smash through the Dardanelles of dead dogma and stir the wilderness of arid formalism into the glad fragrance of a new heaven and a new earth."†

In view of so much that remains to be done, how premature to talk of the end of the world!

* See my book, *The Faith and the Fellowship*, ch. xiv, for a full discussion of this issue.

† J. A. Macdonald, *Democracy and the Nations*, p. 196 f.

Most assuredly a new epoch is at hand. The present upheaval is the prelude to a new and glorious appearing of the Son of man. There will be an end of tyranny, bigotry, autocracy, and anarchy. The purpose of God will yet be realised; not, however, by destruction but by development. The reign of God must begin from above; it is not merely an evolution of society without any regard to the spiritual forces which are indispensable to genuine progress. After the cataclysm and decimation of these years, we are at last learning to understand that service through disinterested sacrifice is the noblest form of human endeavour. Peace is not an end but only a means to the furtherance of the welfare of humanity and the glory of God. The spiritual basis of peace will have "respect for unlikeness," and it will show fraternal consideration for the customs and conventions of other peoples. Where such a community of feeling prevails the all-powerful commercial mind will be spiritualised, so that exploitation shall cease. As Dr. Felix Adler so finely suggests, the relation between the more advanced and the less developed peoples should be analogous to that of parents towards their children. "The salvation of the civilised peoples, their spiritualisation in the effort to spiritualise the less advanced demands a new turn in the his-

tory of humanity. Union in a common sublime object will overcome the antagonisms and discords that prevail among the civilised nations themselves. The sword will never be turned into a plow-share until the nations come to love the work of the plow—the work of spiritual tilth in the human field. The strong peoples will never cease to harm the weak, and in so doing to harm themselves, until they see in the weak, members of the *corpus spirituale* of mankind, depositaries of potential spiritual life in liberating which they the strong themselves will find increased life. And the task of uplifting the lower peoples will never be successfully prosecuted until it is seen to be part of the task of humanity in general, which is to spread the web of spiritual relations over larger and ever larger provinces of the finite realm.”* This is the Christian ideal with its vision of world-wide freedom. Let the Christian patriot cultivate it assiduously, and while he remains loyal to the best traditions and interests of his own nation, let him also have an understanding sympathy with the faith of every nation. Thus can we pray and labour for the universal acceptance of the spiritual idealism of Jesus Christ, that the God of the Christian redemption may be all in all.

* Adler: *An Ethical Philosophy of Life*, p. 339 f.

CHAPTER TWO: WHO IS ANTI-CHRIST?

CHAPTER TWO

WHO IS ANTICHRIST?

THE presence of evil is taken for granted in times of peace when people are busy with their own affairs and are not seriously interrupted, and are more or less contented with things as they are. But when trouble comes and when signs of danger appear on the horizon which threaten to upset existing conditions, then the thoughts of people are turned to the subject of evil. This is when the teachers of religion have an opportunity to direct enquiring minds so that they might receive comfort and courage to face the fiery ordeal in days of crisis. If rightly instructed, they will also obtain assurance of the ultimate triumph of good over evil, although it would be at the cost of much suffering and distress. The pessimist sees the clouds that bring the storm and desolation, and he is so taken up with this vision of darkness that he loses heart. The optimist, on the other hand, reminds himself that there will be calm after storm, peace after struggle; he therefore sees the silver lining in the clouds

and is confident that the sun will yet shine, for evil shall be overthrown. He thus maintains a stout heart, and is willing to take his full share in enduring hardness, since at the end of the day, "at eventime there shall be light" and not darkness. He is the kind of man who says:

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him
For the help of his countenance." *

The apostle of the Christian gospel confessed his reliance on God with even greater persuasiveness. He declared that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." † Thus all who shared his faith were sustained in the dark day. They had become partakers of the divine nature, and they gave diligence in their faith to supply virtue, and in virtue knowledge, and in knowledge self-control, and in self-control patience, and in patience godliness, and in godliness love of the brethren, and in love of the brethren love.‡ It can be equally true of us t' at we will come out of this great crisis with a clean record only as

* Psalm 42:5.

† 1 Cor. 10:13.

‡ 2 Peter 1:4 f.

we manifest the spirit of loyalty, and show the practice of patriotism, and perform the deeds of sacrifice. We must all do our part. No one is too insignificant, no town is too small; every one, everywhere and all the time must be ready to use all their resources that thus out of tribulation there might come triumph.

Let us not belittle the power of evil. Not so did the ancients. Its sinister and unwelcome presence was openly and fearlessly recognised. However much we may disagree with the demonology of the New Testament, it does not alter the fact that evil is a grim reality, inspired and controlled by the devil. Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Deliver us from the evil one." He referred to Satan under one of the current names of Beelzebub, the prince of evil spirits, who is clad in shining armour and who resists the counsels of God, with intent to frustrate his purpose of redemption. He is moreover the enemy of God, always engaged in sowing tares that the harvest might be destroyed. He is the father of deceit and cunning, a murderer from the beginning, with whom there cannot be compromise.* Paul was not surprised that there were "false apostles, deceitful workers . . . for even Satan fashioneth himself into

* John 8:44.

an angel of light.”* So real is the presence of this instigator of treachery, that it is absurd for us to suppose that we can laugh him out of existence and regard him as the creature of morbid fancy. True believers in Christ can, however, resist him and check his advances. This fiendish personality has furthermore incarnated himself in his chosen agents, who are expert in practising the art of camouflage. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing and these infernal caricatures of the Christ are well called antichrist. Yes, the New Testament writers reckoned seriously with evil and waged a good warfare against it. Their confidence was secure: “If God is for us, who is against us?”†

The name antichrist is found in the New Testament only in the first and second epistles of John (2:18, 22; 4:3; II:7). But the idea is very common and it is expressed under a variety of names and figures of speech. Antichrist means one who is an opponent of Christ, or a rival of Christ, or a substitute of Christ. He is a “person in whom the forces of evil are concentrated, rising up in blasphemy, seducing men by deceit, giving himself out as the antagonist of the true God.”‡ All the tendercies of defiant wicked-

* 2 Cor. 11:13.

† Rom. 8:31.

‡ Kennedy: *St. Paul’s Conceptions of the Last Things*, p. 209.

ness are personified in this individual, who is an incarnation of evil just as Christ is the incarnation of goodness. His sole purpose is thus to counteract every form of good. Several persons have had the unenviable distinction of representing this dark figure at various critical periods in the history of the world, when it seemed as though the fate of humanity hung in the balances. Let us note some of these instances as it will help us better to interpret the circumstances of our own times.

The book of Daniel was written at a time of fearful menace and humiliation. Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, known as the madman, was the king of Syria, 175-164 B.C. He has hardly had an equal as regards insolent impiety combined with wild ambition and ruthless tyranny. He was unscrupulous in his treatment of everything sacred; but it was only in the land of Judæa that he met with much opposition to his programme to hellenise the peoples of his empire and so unify it. These obstinate obscurantists, as he regarded them, were visited with sharp vengeance. He forbade the observance of the Sabbath, destroyed the sacred books, dismantled and laid waste the temple, and caused an image of Jupiter to be placed in the holy place. To cap the climax, swine were sacrificed on the holy altars. All the cities and villages were also commanded

to erect temples and offer swine on heathen altars. The endurance of the worshippers of Jehovah finally reached the breaking point and they arose in fierce revolt under the leadership of Mattathias and his five valiant sons. The issue was determined by war, and after the death of Antiochus, the religious liberties of this loyal people were made secure. This whole situation is picturesquely described in the visions of Daniel. If we do not insist on finding a meaning in every one of the figures and in all the details, we can see that the little horn which arose with such vehemence to work destruction refers to the same power of evil represented by the king with the fierce countenance (7:8; 8:23). This personage finally came to grief and was "broken without hand," not by the might of man but by the power of God (8:25). The faithful, however, survived the disasters. "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh (attaineth) to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days"; this refers to the period after the death of Antiochus. Meanwhile the prophet was assured that "thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (12:12f.). All the prophecies concerning the arch-enemy of God deal with the same principles. The powers of evil were moved by the same spirit of antagonism to God and to everything that makes for

holiness and truth. For instance, previous to the times of Daniel there was the prophecy of Ezekiel, which announced the descent of savage hordes upon the Holy Land, under the leadership of Gog. They would work violent desolation but their end shall be destruction. "And thou son of man prophesy against Gog and say, Thus saith the Lord . . . I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand and will cause thine armour to fall out of thy right hand. . . . I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured." (39:1ff.; cf. chap. 38.)

The end foretold by both Ezekiel and Daniel did not take place to the exact letter of their utterances. The spirit and practice of tyranny continued and the enemies of the people of God appeared at various periods, who interfered with the progress of truth. There was Pompey, who captured Jerusalem in the autumn of 63 B.C. and "committed enormities about the temple itself," entering the Holy of Holies and desecrating it. He incidentally ended the seditious rule of such selfish leaders of the Maccabees like Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, but the evil he wrought was characteristic of Anti-Christ.* At a later age Herod the Great, so misnamed, was a blasphemous opponent of the true

* Josephus, *Antiquities*, Bk. xiv, ch. iv.

religion. Then there was Caligula (37-41 A.D.), "a half-insane person but insane with the idea of autocracy," who ordered Petronius, the governor, to erect a statue in the temple, but this imperial criminal died before his iniquitous command was carried out. It might here be said in passing that every one of the antichrists has been autocratic in disposition, and this trait is one of the definite marks of their infamous character. It is in the first century that we find clear references to the rulers who were bitterly hostile to Christianity and who used their resources to prevent the spread of the gospel. It was, however, of little avail. As Paul wrote from wide personal experience: "We can do nothing against the truth but for the truth."* To be sure, we can delay the fulfilling of the will of God by our obstinacy and opposition, but we shall never defeat the final fulfilment of the divine will. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever."†

Paul refers to persecuting Judaism under the figure of "the lawless one."‡ The power which restrained this anti-Christian foe was the Roman Empire, which upheld law and justice

* 2 Cor. 13:8.

† Isaiah 40:8.

‡ 2 Thess. 2:8.

and protected Paul and the Christian missionaries from the severe invectives of the Jews. Their attitude demonstrated all the more clearly how far they had forsaken God and become apostates. Not only had they crucified the Messiah of promise, but they also conducted an unscrupulous persecution of those who testified to the risen and living Messiah, Jesus Christ our Lord.* So far as the laws of the Roman State were concerned, they kept at bay every institution which violated the rights of civilisation. This was done not only in the first century, Paul himself being a witness thereto, but also in later times. It was nothing but Roman power that saved Christianity from the Mohammedan invasion of the eighth century and delivered Europe from the imperilling control of the Saracen. On the other hand, "we must distinguish between the laws of the Roman State and the personal power of the Emperor, whose despotism habitually trampled on the laws and yet was checked by them."† Nero was one of the worst of the Cæsars. He fiddled while Rome burned, and although himself the instigator of this incendiarism, the Christians were charged with this crime and many were burned to death.

* 1 Thess. 2:14-16.

† Findlay, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Cambridge Bible), p. 148.

This mad emperor was a striking personality, and he so impressed himself on the mind and imagination of the Empire, that a belief was spread abroad that he would return from the dead. The book of Revelation refers to him under the figure of the wild beast which comes out of the abyss, having ten horns and seven heads. The legend of Nero's return is referred to in the words: "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not: and is about to come out out of the abyss." This mysterious creature reflects in his behaviour the reputed cruelties of Nero. On this scarlet-coloured beast there was a woman seated, "the mother of the harlots," who is also the fierce rival of the church.* The reference here is to the remarkable state-religion of the Roman Empire known as Emperor-worship. The earlier description of the beast rising up out of the sea and the later description of the dragon refer to the same individual under different aspects of his hostile antagonism to Christianity. The second beast who rises out of the land refers to the false prophet, that is, the provincial priests who administered the rites of Emperor-worship.† Both Paul and John recognised in this powerful religious system the incarnation of evil, and

* Chap. 17:3 ff.

† 13:11.

they “knew that in the end the church must destroy the imperial tyranny or be killed by it.”* Wicked emperors like Nero and Domitian were succeeded by wise men who were an honour to the purple, but the name Cæsarism continued to be understood by succeeding generations as a synonym of everything that was illegal, autocratic, tyrannical, and monstrously infamous. Much ingenuity has been shown in interpreting the number of the beast, which is six hundred and sixty-six or six hundred and sixteen according to a different test.† This method of symbolical hieroglyphics was employed in that early day because the Christians would otherwise have been exposed to even worse persecutions. We have lost the key with which to interpret this and other mysterious figures of speech, and no amount of verbal jugglery will make the truth clear to us. It is sufficient to know that by means of emblems and symbols the early Christians showed that they were confident that evil would at last be defeated. Well for us if that is our confidence and if in its strength we fight the good fight.‡

* Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul*, p. 430.

† Rev. 13:18.

‡ Hebrew letters have numerical value. The name נרון קסר is equal to 666. Reading from right to left the figures are $50+200+6+50+100+60+200$. If the name is written as in Latin without the final *n*, to read Nero then deduct 50, and the number would be 616.

The figure of Antichrist has never left the stage. Jesus warned his disciples against false Christs and false prophets and reminded them that deception is both easy and dangerous. Hence his exhortations to watchfulness and prayer.* Attempts to identify Antichrist have gone on at every critical period in the history of the world. It was frequently used as a catchword and applied to opponents of social, political, ecclesiastical and doctrinal changes, as well as to the bringers of revolution. In the struggle between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines, between the Franciscans and the papacy, between heretics and the church, between the reformers and the Roman Catholic church, the name Antichrist was freely bandied by both parties in a spirit of mutual vehemence. At the French Revolution, Napoleon was regarded as a veritable Antichrist, whose genius and egotism led him onwards to St. Helena. Mohammed was another Antichrist, since he encouraged his followers to push forward at the point of the sword. The Crusaders were so keen on capturing Jerusalem because it would deliver the Holy City from the impious hands of the infidel. Abdul Hamid, the late sultan of Turkey, better known as Abdul the Damned, was rightly regarded as Antichrist by the Christians of Arme-

* Mt. 7:15; 24:4; Lk. 17:21.

nia and indeed by all Western nations. It is not necessary to think of Antichrist as referring exclusively to a person. In the first epistle of John the spread of heresy was regarded as one of the signs of the last times and Antichrist was the arch-heretic. But the apprehensions of this writer were groundless, for the appearance of heresy "was rather an evidence that the gospel was winning its way. The era of simple and unquestioning faith in the apostolic testimony was past, and men were beginning to enquire and reason. A heresy has the same use in theology as a mistaken hypothesis in science: it provokes thought and leads to a deeper understanding." * There is both truth and humour in a saying of Professor R. W. Rogers: "You can learn more from a great man when he is wrong than from a little man when he is right." Our understanding of Antichrist is that it refers to a person or institution which deliberately sets out to obtain power for purposes of selfish aggrandisement, and is not at all scrupulous as to the means employed to secure the nefarious ends. We can go further and think of Antichrist as the spirit of open defiance of God and of subtle indifference to him. It is a tendency to do without God as though he were a negligible quantity and hardly necessary. Herein lies the madness of our age.

* David Smith, *Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. V., 179.

We can come to our senses only as we give God the right of way.

In our own day, who might justifiably be regarded as Antichrist? Who is the modern incarnation of insolent wickedness; who has unscrupulously violated everything sacred; who has used pious language to deceive; who has been the seducer and the conspirator against humanity; who is the prophet of falsehood, the apostle of the superman and the advocate of sheer brute force; who has shown lofty ambitions, heartless cruelty, and the most despicable selfishness? The Kaiser has not only been double-faced but many-faced. He has acted the part of a Protestant in Berlin, of a Roman Catholic at the Vatican, and also declared himself the "Protector of all the Moslems" at Damascus. This latter announcement has been endorsed since the war by his accepting the infernal Turks as his protégés. Indeed he has changed like the chameleon whenever it suited his advantage. In the attempt to carry out the dream of Pan-Germanism, which is an obsession of the Hohenzollerns, the German people have been urged to let nothing stand in the way of its realisation, not even the risk of losing their soul. The speech which the Kaiser addressed to his armies as they were setting out to the far East expressed the same spirit that inspires him

to-day, and breathes all the fury of Antichrist at his worst. "Remember that you are the Chosen People. The Spirit of the Lord has descended upon me, because I am the Emperor of the Germans. I am the Instrument of the All High. I am his Sword and his Vicar on earth. Death and destruction to those who resist my will. Perish all the enemies of the German people. God requires their destruction, God who by my mouth commands you to carry out his will." * The policy of the "mailed fist" has been consistently carried out, wherever the German armies have gone. But the ancient confidence of the people of God has not departed from our midst. We are still assured that the outcome will be for the furtherance of truth and righteousness, although as on previous occasions, it will involve suffering, affliction, loss and sorrow. Let us continue firm in our faith, steadfast in our loyalty to principle, ready for the most exacting sacrifices, and dominated by the "will to win" this stern war. There never can be peace with those who have betrayed the human race. Before we can come to terms with them, they must give proof that they not only understand the rights of other nations but that they are also willing to respect them. A great gulf now exists between autocracy, as repre-

* Willmore, *The Great Crime and Its Moral*, p. 130.

sented by the militarism of Prussia, and democracy, as it is espoused by the Allies. It is not by compromise but by conversion to the acceptance of the ideal of fraternity and liberty, that the world shall ever be able to enjoy immunity from treachery and be free to devote its energies to bring in that day when it can be said: "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

CHAPTER THREE: ARMAGEDDON

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ARMAGEDDON

THE civilised world was in a desperate condition when the War broke out in August, 1914. As in the days of Noah men were marrying and giving in marriage, and living in the enjoyment of the material things of life without any sense of conscience or duty. Then the flood came and swept everything into desolation. Out of the disaster a new world was born. In our own times before the war, material prosperity and progress in science and art had almost reached the point of perfection. People were interested in making money so that they might spend it on their pleasures. The vulgarity of the rich with their snobbishness and selfishness was paralleled by the hostility of the poor with their discontent and cynicism. There was no regard for God nor immortality. An occasional voice was heard in protest, but these prophetic summons fell on deaf ears. It seemed useless to interpret and apply "the law of the inevitability of moral consequences," even when it was illustrated by some of the startling events

of history. The moral stagnation and spiritual dulness were all the more serious when placed by the side of the material achievements. Germany was enjoying extraordinary industrial and commercial prosperity. Her chemists, scientists and inventors were turning out wonderful products, and her citizens were amassing wealth in all parts of the world. But the Germans were deluded by the vision of conquering the whole world and subduing it, under the erroneous persuasion that their Kultur was the gospel of God. They were nevertheless without spiritual vision. This is not surprising, for their spokesmen were Haeckel, the advocate of rank materialism, who taught that the universe is the product of matter and not of mind or heart; and Tannenberg, who maintained that Germany must become a world-power and acquire political pre-eminence by resort to arms.* Some of the true prophets of modern Germany in the spirit of Kant, Hegel and Schiller, did speak against these sensuous gods of the market place. One of them was Rudolf Eucken, who stated in varying forms that he had a "strong and painful conviction of the inadequacy and indeed the emptiness of

* "I never found a German of the ruling class who had read anything written by Treitschke, Nietzsche or Bernhardi. Tannenberg had more readers, and a greater following, although he, of course, expresses only the aspirations of the Pan-Germans."—Gerard: *Face to Face With Kaiserism*, p. 182.

modern civilisation, in spite of all its outer ostentation." Other nations of the Western world were also in a dangerous state, although unaware of the fact or refusing to acknowledge it. Take a novel like *The Duchess of Wrexhe*, by Hugh Walpole. It reflects conditions in England just before the War. There were three classes in society, made up of autocrats, aristocrats and democrats, who were separated from one another by insurmountable barriers. The Duchess was a representative type, surrounded by illusions and delusions as to the inherent superiority of the aristocracy and the essential worthlessness of the working classes. Her passing away was the signal for the disappearance of this Philistinism and the dawning of the day of a "Universal brotherhood, of unselfishness, restraint, charity, tolerance." Turn to *The Thirteenth Commandment*, by Rupert Hughes, and you find social and commercial conditions in the United States searchingly laid bare. Bayard honestly confessed the cause of much of our misery. "We're all living beyond our income, spending to-day what we expect to get to-morrow, spending to-morrow what we expect to get next week. We gamble on our luck and our health: and the smallest mishap spills the beans all over the place." Next take up *King Coal*, by Upton Sinclair, which exposes the

tragedy of exploitation and how laws are broken faster than the governors of any of the states can sign them. John Oxenham has well diagnosed the world situation:

“Take it to heart! This ordeal has its meaning:
By no fell chance has such a horror come.
Take it to heart! nor count indeed on winning,
Until the lesson has come surely home.

Not of our own might shall this tribulation
Pass, and once more to earth be peace restored:
Not till we turn, in solemn consecration,
Wholly to him, our One and Sovereign Lord.” *

Under these circumstances a crash was inevitable. We did not think that it would be so terrible, but that is another question. We can regard war as the scourge of God to purify society. But we should hardly regard it as a judgment of God because we are incapable of determining with exact discrimination who are guilty and who are innocent. A plague which brings disease and death is not a punishment of God but an exposure of the folly and cupidity of men. If we do pray for its disappearance, it must not be a petition for the arbitrary intervention of God, but that he might give us common sense to attend to the laws of sanitation and cleanliness that so we might lessen its rav-

* “All’s Well!” p. 93.

ages and prevent its recurrence. When a much-advertised preacher declared the other day that Belgium is suffering for the atrocities of the late King Leopold committed on the Congo, he showed his ignorance of the teachings of the New Testament and presumed to be wiser than Jesus himself. In the Old Testament everything is attributed to God, and no secondary causes are recognised. Thus we read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, as though Pharaoh did not exercise his will to resist the divine appeals. The intermediate stages are omitted, but we must not overlook them unless we desire to accept the error of fatalism. Amos asks, "Shall there be evil in the city and the Lord have not done it?" Those who by persistent disobedience reject the counsels of honour and right dull their conscience, and they who are unrighteous will be allowed to do unrighteousness, until they are submerged and destroyed by their own iniquity. Jesus made the distinction clear when he attributed evil to a power that was hostile to God. Whence the tares in the field? An enemy hath done it. And those who ally themselves with the enemy must pay the dire consequences.

The Bible is the record of the continuous struggle between the forces of good and evil. The world-systems of light and darkness are engaged in incessant conflict; but light will

finally dispel the darkness and there will be glory everywhere. This truth is expressed by the forward look in the Bible. Its gaze is turned to the golden age in the future. From the garden that was stained by sin, we look to the garden that shall be, through which shall flow the pure river of the water of life. But during the interval there must needs be loss, anguish, bitterness and desolation, at times developing into fearful calamities and at other times with their alleviating circumstances. Throughout the period of trial the devoted were sustained by their faith, which was loyalty and honour towards Christ, which further gave them certainty that the threatened cause could not be lost. Such an unconquerable spirit made them invincible in the presence of the hosts of wickedness. The apocalyptic writings like Daniel and Revelation were produced in times of crisis with intent to encourage the struggling saints. They were ethical and optimistic, and in spite of severe disasters the outstanding message was "God reigns, and righteousness shall ultimately prevail." * What gave buoyancy to the faith of the New Testament was the fact of experience that after tribulation there comes restoration, after crucifixion there is resurrection, after

* Charles: *Religious Development between the Old and the New Testaments*, p. 30.

Armageddon there is the New Jerusalem coming down from God.* The Christian attitude therefore is one of confidence not of resignation, of faith not of fatality, of hope not of despair. Jesus knew that a world-crisis was imminent when the world-order would be completely destroyed, and out of its ruins arise a nobler and better order, even the new age wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Nothing can be allowed to outlive its usefulness and when it ceases to render any service it must be dismissed. We do not believe in the "conservation of value," but rather in the "augmentation of value." When Isaiah prophesied that Jerusalem would be inviolate, he did so because the Holy City in his day was indispensable to the interests of true religion. Conditions had radically changed in the days of Jeremiah, and he prophesied that the City and temple would be destroyed because both had come to stand in the way of the progress of true religion. One did not contradict the other, but spoke according to the conditions of their times. In the days of Jesus the ecclesiastical corruptions made inevitable the destruction of Jerusalem, of which he prophesied and which happened in 70 A.D. Out of this disaster Christianity was stimulated to extend the boundaries of

* Cf. Streeter: *Concerning Prayer*, p. 7.

its influence. What was regarded as a calamity was in truth a blessing in disguise. This has frequently happened in the course of the centuries. Out of the destruction of the Roman Empire there came the intrepid European civilisation. The Mediæval mind was succeeded by the Protestant mind, which would not tolerate the errors of indulgences and other demoralising practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The principles of the Reformation were embodied in the political and social system of France, but when the French monarchy and aristocracy, who were the leading representatives of European culture, sold themselves to do evil, and when they magnified reason to the exclusion of God, then the French Revolution came as a terrific reminder that man cannot violate the eternal law of righteousness and escape the penal consequences. But out of the terrors of this period there came a better day of moral, social and political life, not only for all of Europe but also for America. At every one of these crises the kings of the world were gathered together unto the war of the great day of God Almighty. Every one of these struggles was a battle of Armageddon; and the outcome was invariably the defeat of the kings of the earth, who stood for all the elements of evil in the divers forms of tyranny, exploitation, cor-

ruption in the body politic, social, commercial and national.

What did the seer of the book of Revelation mean by the battle of Armageddon? * He was referring to the classic battle ground of Scripture. The plain of Esdraelon was the scene of many of the decisive battles recorded in the Bible. The kings of Canaan were defeated by Barak, who fought Sisera and his armies, and the victory was celebrated by Deborah, who rejoiced that the stars in their courses fought against the enemy and brought a triumph which cemented the tribes of Israel.† Gideon achieved a notable victory over the Midianites in this same region, and drove back the Arab hordes beyond the Jordan.‡ It was here also that King Saul met with defeat and death, as well as his three sons, who perished at the hands of the Philistines.§ At a later time Josiah, king of Judah, who had piety without judgment, was slain by Pharaoh Necho, on his way to fight the armies of the Assyrians. The death of this beloved king was the occasion of much lamentation at Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddō.** This territory has been the scene of the

* 16:14 ff.

† Judges 5.

‡ Judges 7.

§ 1 Sam. 31.

** 2 Chron. 35:20 ff.

struggles of Syrians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Hebrews, Romans and Crusaders, even down to the days of Napoleon. "What a plain it is! Upon which not only the greatest empires, races, and faiths, east and west, have contended with each other, but each has come to judgment—on which from the first, with all its splendour of human battle, men have felt that there was fighting from heaven, the stars in their courses were fighting—on which panic has descended so mysteriously upon the best equipped and most successful armies, but the humble have been exalted to victory in the hour of their weakness—on which false faiths, equally with false defenders of the true faith, have been exposed and scattered—on which since the time of Saul wilfulness and superstition, though aided by every human excellence, have come to nought, and since Josiah's time the purest piety has not atoned for rash and mistaken zeal. The Crusaders repeat the splendid folly of the kings of Israel; and, alike under the old and the new covenant, a degenerate church suffers here her judgment at the hands of the infidel."* All this has great significance, and when the seer desired to emphasise the decisive turning point

* George Adam Smith: *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 409.

in the history of humanity which was coming in his own day, when the struggle between good and evil would be intensified, he very appropriately declared that it would take place at the battle of Armageddon. We misunderstand the literary style and genius of the New Testament writers if we take this reference with bald literalness. Armageddon is not a place but an experience. It tells of our wrestling not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual hosts of wickedness, first on the field of our own soul, and then in the wider arena of life where men meet for the transaction of their affairs. This fact of an intense struggle which is recognised throughout the Bible is given a picturesque setting by the seer of Patmos. He agrees with prophet, apocalyptist and apostle of both Old and New Testaments, that the end of the struggle will be the complete defeat of the powers of darkness and the glorious triumph of the servants of the eternal God.

The conflict in which we have a share at the present day is the greatest in the history of the world, involving more nations and more issues than any previous war. We use the word battle not as referring to a single engagement but to the whole war. In this sense we can see in it the battle of Armageddon, set on a wide historical landscape and summoning to the con-

flict the most heroic of the sons of earth. The price already paid has been tremendous. But need we be in doubt as to the final outcome? When has force ever secured permanent control? "Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, where are they?" They were all established on the foundations of brute power but they were miserably lacking in spiritual vision. They have all descended into the depths of destruction. The fate of Napoleon at Waterloo is a prophecy of the fate of all who would defy God and humanity, in their unscrupulous attempt to force their way to world domination. Thus far can they go and no farther. All their prowess and equipment will count for nought, for the verdict of God is against them. This is the significance of Armageddon. The turn in the tides must come, but not without considerable suffering, sacrifice and distress. It has always been true that "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God."* In the struggle that is now bitterly waging, the Church of Christ is also at stake, as indeed is every cause which is working for the highest welfare of the human race. It is one of the encouraging signs that the church is alive to the situation as never before. Through her far-sighted leaders in every de-

* Acts 14:22.

nomination the word has gone forth that the programme for the new day must approximate more closely to the spirit of the Master, who said that he "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."* In place of much of our conventionalism we need to show heroism in the profession and practice of Christianity. Much of our prim religious respectability is as effete as it is ineffectual. We must learn to "live dangerously," in a far higher sense than Nietzsche understood it. There must be the abandon, the enthusiasm, the endurance of the heroic Christ. We are gratified and grateful for the sublime renunciation of our soldiers at the front and of all who are left behind at home. They are showing a spirit worthy of a noble cause. There must be sacrificial devotion, no less intense, given to Christ, for the sake of the increased effectiveness of the church in the coming days. There is much latent energy in the church which must not only be released but rightly directed. Under the leadership of men of vision, our spiritual resources will be developed and enriched, so that the armies of the Lord Christ will put to rout the godless kings of the world, "in man's last fight for love and right, for faith and larger liberty."

* Matt. 20:28 ff.

"He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call
retreat,

He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat:

Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet,

Our God is marching on."

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MILLENNIUM

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THE MILLENNIUM

THE writers of the Bible contemplated the struggle between good and evil in an optimistic spirit. They were certain that the age-long conflict between these two forces would result in the triumph of righteousness and peace. They had every reason to feel justified that the progress of the human race has been by goodness overcoming the antagonism of wickedness. At times it seemed as though the powers of darkness would have the upper hand and do their very worst. But there was the inevitable reaction when it became evident that, as always, light was stronger than darkness. The assurance of Daniel, the seer, has been shared by others. "The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed . . . his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."* All true believers in every generation have had this confidence, even to our own day. We believe that the conquest of Christ has been

* 2:44; 7:27.

going on apace in every century and in every country. To be sure, the progress has been interrupted by divers causes, but it has been steadily gaining strength, and to-day Jesus Christ has a larger number of men and women who are loyal to him than at any other time. More people are accepting him as Saviour and Lord and are being intelligently influenced and guided by his principles of truth, peace and service. They do so because of the deeper recognition and stronger conviction that genuine security and real advance can come only through him.

Just before the ascension of Jesus, his disciples asked him whether the time had at last arrived when he would restore the kingdom to Israel. They had the idea of an earthly kingdom, when Jesus would set up his rule in Jerusalem and exercise sovereignty over the peoples of the earth. They were looking for an earthly kingdom while he insisted that his was to be a spiritual kingdom. They were better able to grasp his purpose after the illumination of Pentecost, although they continued to hope that he would return in glory in their own day. Their expectations were not realised but the living hope continued to sustain them even when the fruition was indefinitely postponed. It is however one of the ironies of history that groups

of Christian people have insisted on looking for an earthly kingdom of Christ, without any regard to the purpose and programme of the Master. These earnest folk have taken in a literal sense the words of Jesus: "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." They have persuaded themselves that this beatitude has reference to the possession of material well-being. As a matter of fact, this has never been the case. What the meek have really inherited has been the ability to influence others for good; they have also had the enjoyment of holy fellowship with God, with the noblest spirits of earth, and later with the redeemed of all ages in heaven. This same idea of blissful communion is picturesquely expressed by Jesus in apocalyptic language, when he declared to his disciples: "Ye are they who have stood by me through my trials; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones to rule the twelve tribes of Israel."* This promise was never literally fulfilled, so far as the apostles were concerned. What they did not experience it is vain for any one in a later age to expect to enjoy. But in a far larger sense, the apostles have been ruling the world of

* Luke 22:28 ff.

thought and life; and the principles of our Lord which they expounded and which are recorded in the New Testament, are still influencing the better types of mankind. There is no code of living that has found precedence over the teachings of the "Book of humanity." Kings have borne rule and have passed away, many of them into oblivion, but these liege men of Jesus will never be forgotten.

"A glorious band, the chosen few
On whom the Spirit came,
Twelve valiant saints, their hope they knew,
And mocked the cross and flame:
They climbed the steep ascent of heaven
Through peril, toil, and pain:
O God, to us may grace be given
To follow in their train."

How much better it is to be remembered with such gratitude by succeeding generations than to have the laurels of a passing day, however long that day may be. It is further beside the question to argue, as some have done, that misfortune and trouble on earth will find compensation in heaven. This idea is a misconception of the words in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, where Abraham is represented as saying to the rich man that since he had his good things on earth and Lazarus evil, now the tables must be reversed. The underlying thought is

that of character. The gulf between the two men was spiritual and not physical, and it could not be bridged in any arbitrary way. Death does not change our character but only our condition. We need not therefore make a virtue of distress in itself, under the impression that those who have borne the ills of life here will necessarily have their portion of bliss in the hereafter, regardless of ethical considerations.

In the early Christian centuries a great deal was made of the passage in Revelation 20:1-10, which referred to the reign of Christ of a thousand years. This is the only place where there is any allusion to the millennium; but the underlying thought of the triumph of Christ is common in the New Testament. Much fantastic speculation has been indulged in by millennarians of every type of thought, all of whom hold to a materialistic conception of Christianity. They regard the progress of the world as punctuated by abrupt interventions and crises. Their outlook is invariably pessimistic, and they underestimate the benefits which have already come to the world through the gospel. They fail to distinguish between the kernel and the husk, and they have no understanding or appreciation of the symbolism of religious language. They cherish the idea that the prophets wrote history before it took place. For instance, when

the prophets spoke of the return from exile, they declared that the temple would be restored and the priesthood be re-established with the system of Levitical sacrifices. The new temple was built and the ancient rites were resumed, B.C. 516. But the glory of this latter house was not at all like the grandeur of the former days, so much so that the most ardent were disappointed and many gave up the faith of the fathers and followed worldly ways with all the practices of corruption and injustice. Since those days of disquietude and disillusion the Messiah Christ had come. According to the epistle to the Hebrews, he brought the substance and so dispensed with the shadows. "He, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God."* How strange then that any Christian should suppose that there would be a reversal in the order of things and that the religious cultus would again be established in Jerusalem. The history of the world has not been marked by retrogression but by advance, and one increasing purpose is being made manifest throughout the ages. How incredible and contrary to fact to think for a moment that we must go back to the "beggarly elements" of ritualistic bondage before there can be any further progress

* 10:1-12.

towards the fair City of God. In spite of the fact that definite announcements by enthusiasts concerning the end of things have been repeatedly discredited, there are still some who presume to furnish details, as though they had direct information. If they themselves are not confused by their weird contradictions, they certainly mislead the credulous. They go on the principle that the more incredible are their views so much the greater is the demand on faith. But such faith is really superstition and fanaticism and not the confidence in what we hope, the fervent conviction of the reality of what we do not see.* Earnest souls proclaimed that the millennial kingdom of Christ would most assuredly be established in the year 500. But it did not come. The successors of these readers of the signs made announcements that their hopes would be realised in the year 1785, again in the years 1816, 1836, 1847, but nothing happened. And yet in the face of these mistaken prognostications, we continue to hear excited announcements of the speedy coming of the personal reign of Christ.†

How then are we to understand this truth of the millennium? Let us remember that great

* Heb. 11:1.

† Cf. Case, *The Millennial Hope*, ch. iv, for a historical survey of recent millenarian teaching.

significance is attached to the symbolism of numbers in the Scriptures. Three expresses a small total; seven conveys the idea of exactness; ten is a symbol of the finite; a thousand is symbolical of completeness. The period of time is not to be taken literally in the passage in Revelation any more than in any other part of the Scriptures. The thought is not that of chronology but of completeness. "Satan is bound for a thousand years; that is, he is completely bound. The saints reign for a thousand years; that is, they are introduced into a state of perfect and glorious victory."* The idea of the binding of Satan was borrowed from Jewish apocalyptists and from legends common to Persian and Hellenistic thought. It did not mean that Satan would be unable to do any sort of damage, but that he would exercise his evil within bounds. Then, as the end drew near and he knew that his fate was to be disastrous, he would become increasingly vehement, and determine to drag others down into ruin with himself. This is the afterthought that we find in the passage that he would be "loosed out of his prison," and go forth in one desperate and frantic attempt, to gather all his forces for the battle of Armageddon. There was a belief in the early

* Milligan: *The Book of Revelation* (Expositor's Bible), p. 337.

church that the triumphant end would be preceded by great trouble and intense suffering. The thought is reflected in this passage relating to the millennium. It means that evil would increase in resistance as it draws near to its fatal ending. But there was no doubt in the minds of the faithful as to the outcome. From his place of usurped authority, Satan would be hurled into the lake of fire and brimstone, and with him both the beast who is the symbol of Antichrist and the false prophet who represents the system of emperor-worship. Can we not see here a prophecy of the complete defeat of the powers of godlessness and wickedness, which have raged and ravaged all through the centuries? The saints of old had become weary and impatient and they cried aloud, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long wilt thou refrain from charging and avenging our blood upon those who dwell on earth?"* They were assured that the day of judgment would not be long delayed. How very like the cry that has gone up from many breasts in this fifth year of the war! But those who longed for a speedy peace now realise that they were short-sighted. There never can be peace on a compromise basis. The one and only course is to defeat Prussian militarism and compel the Kaiser and his delud-

* Rev. 6:10.

ed followers to sheathe the sword so that its demonic glitter shall never again blind the vision of the human race.

A limit was set to the power of Satan as soon as Jesus began his merciful ministry. The demon-possessed exclaimed, "What have we to do with thee, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"* Ever since Jesus commenced to preach the gospel of the Kingdom, his star has been on the ascendant. One triumph has been followed by another and a greater, and his influence is gradually leavening the entire world. There was a belief that the reign of the Messiah would be preliminary and limited to the earth; but this is one of the imperfect and undeveloped ideas of Judaism, which is out of harmony with the spiritual conception of Christianity. We believe in the law of development. It is inconceivable that after Christ has been in control, driving the devil from his entrenchments, he would step aside, even for a brief moment, to let the enemy have a chance to hurl his bolts of fury and distress on the world. The drama of redemption is not to be acted as though it were written by some playwright. It is really an exhibition of what is actually taking place in human life. We are not travelling in a circle

* Matt. 8:29.

but journeying upwards and onwards, headed for the grand climax, when after Christ has put down all other rulers, authorities and powers, he will hand over his royal power to God the Father, so that God may be everything to every one. "For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet."* There is no hint of surrender in the career of conquest. Christ has already "baffled, defeated, defied all 'the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places,' " and their final destruction is only a question of time.

The truth of Providence in history can be well illustrated from the careers of Alexander and Napoleon. The civilisation of Greece was fully developed and the ideal of a perfect state, as interpreted by Plato and Aristotle, was before the nation. Then it was that the Macedonian appeared on the scene under the conviction that it was to be his mission to carry Greek culture to the ends of the earth. Alexander led his victorious armies through Asia Minor and Syria and further East, until he reached the banks of the Indus. Here his military career was checked, for he had reached the limits of his power. He had done his work and the sceptre was now to pass into other hands. While we think of the devastation that followed

* 1 Cor. 15:25.

in the wake of his military exploits, we must not forget to think of the spiritual quickening which was one of the reactions. The coming of the Greeks synchronised with the beginnings of art in India. Asoka, the beneficent Indian Emperor, was one of the indirect results of this military despotism. The effects of Hellenism in Palestine were even more manifest. It was the preparation for the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and the ultimate liberation of Christianity, largely through the advocacy of the apostle Paul. The activities of Napoleon were at a period in the history of Europe when the sentiment of nationality was making headway. Napoleon likewise was conscious of a world-mission, which was to be fulfilled by the power of military arms. His supreme ambition was to establish a French Empire that would dominate the world. His dream was never realised and at the very height of his conquest he was seized by a power greater than he, and the entire fabric which he had built up on the foundation of force fell to pieces, and he ended his days in dismal exile. The patronising cosmopolitanism of Napoleon found expression in his attitude to religion, as seen in this statement: "My policy consists in governing men as the greatest number wish to be governed. That I think is the way of recognising the sovereignty of the

people. By becoming a Catholic I have ended the Vendean War; by becoming a Moslem I gained a footing in Egypt; by becoming Ultramontane I won over public opinion in Italy. If I governed Jews, I would rebuild the temple of Solomon." He has however been surpassed by the Kaiser who has neither the flexibility, the versatility, nor the sense of humour of the Corsican. After Napoleon the conqueror was conquered, there rose out of the ruins of the nations a better Europe, of a kind that was not anticipated by this military buccaneer.* The same divine Providence which was directing the affairs of the world at these two critical epochs is still in control. The innumerable sacrifices of the present war are to the end not only of making men better but of making it possible for better things to be done. "Future historians will probably date a new epoch from the world-war of the twentieth century. It doubtless marks the beginning of the end of the chronic curse of war; for it has been demonstrated that war has become not merely too horrible, but also too expensive, to be a permanent institution of our earth. If the present struggle is to be the operation that is to remove the deadly disease which has afflicted the race from its infancy, it does not seem, from the point of view of general

* Cf. William Temple, *Church and Nation*, p. 201 ff.

history, that the fee was too heavy for the cure. It is also to be expected that after the war a stronger faith will be cherished in the possibility of coping with other malignant evils. We have learned what a great people can do when it devotes itself with one heart and mind to the organisation of victory; and it will seem a matter of course that the same energy, earnestness, and method should be applied to the perennial warfare with ignorance and destitution, vice and crime, and that the spirit of brotherhood, so signally exemplified in arms, should be equally realised in the arts and the avocations of peace. The church for its part, we hope, will see things in new proportions and perspective, and will forget many ancient controversies in the light of the tasks of the present and the future. To many an individual it has come and will come with the haunting message of Robertson of Brighton: 'There is a past that is beyond recall, but there is a future that is still our own.' '' *

Set the passage about the millennium in its context and you will get the correct idea which underlies it. Chapter 19 gives a vision of the King of kings who conquers the nations of the world, and to whom the saints offer the worship of grateful praise. Chapter 21 gives the pur-

* W. P. Paterson: *In the Day of the Ordeal*, p. 28 f.

pose of this conquest, which is to make a new heaven and a new earth, and to usher in the era of spiritual ascendancy. This period is not placed in the distant future, but is an ideal for present guidance. The golden age does not belong to some problematical future; it is to come to this earth, when the disciples of Jesus take seriously the prayer which he taught his first disciples, to say from their hearts, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." Those who offer up these petitions in sincerity, will put forth united and determined efforts to hasten the day of their realisation. The fact of struggle and distress is undeniable, but equally true is the other fact that Christ is winning trophies unto himself and is gradually occupying the seat of power in the lives of individuals and of society. The survey of missionary work in 1917 is most encouraging, in spite of the distractions of the war. The strikes in Japan indicate that the people in the Sunrise Kingdom are endeavouring to realise their rights. The dramatic changes in China with the granting of religious liberty, the increased spirit of evangelism and the translation of the Bible into the Hakka language spoken by fifteen millions, show the drift of things in that land with a great future. The awakening consciousness of nationality in India and the steps

taken to confer Home Rule, the breaking down of caste, the freedom of intercourse between various classes, and the rising tide of well organised mass-movements towards Christianity—are among the signs of the better to-morrow for that land of three hundred million souls. The increased desire of the churches of Christendom for unity and the demand for emphasising only what is vitally essential, in spite of the opposition of ecclesiastical red-tape, will surely hasten the better day of comity and co-operation, to bless the world with the fruits of wisdom and peace.*

Those who hold to a personal reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years have not thought out the consequences of such an event. Where will he set up his kingdom? If he were to establish it in any one locality, that would at once limit his accessibility. A visible reign which is materialistic means an influence by intermediaries. He would be farther away from his followers than he is at the present time. We are now able to get as near to him as our desires, our faith and our consecration will permit. Since all who trust him are members of a royal priesthood, every one has the privilege to draw near to him with holy confidence, and to realise complete fellowship with him. They are more-

* Cf. *The International Review of Missions*, Jan., 1918.

over enabled to secure his grace for the exacting duties and responsibilities of life and to be comforted in every condition of need. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth."* Our worship of God cannot be spiritual if his reign is to be limited by time and space. The essential truth of the millennium is that of the universal and eternal lordship of Christ. This can be realised not by speculation but by service, as we preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

* John 4:24.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE JUDGMENT

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THE JUDGMENT

WE must remind ourselves repeatedly that a distinction should be made between the description of an event and the event itself. Language is the medium to convey thought, and the style of the language depends on the writer and his method of treatment. The poetic style is rhythmic and musical, soft and harmonious, and sometimes alliterative. It is always vivid and picturesque. But there is a difference between the nature poetry of an Oriental like Tagore and an Occidental like Wordsworth. There is further a difference between the tones of Tennyson in "In Memoriam" and the abrupt strength of Browning in "Saul," although both deal with immortality and love. Then again, the style of prose varies with different writers. The essays of Emerson, Matthew Arnold, Lamb, and F. W. Boreham are distinctive of each one. Historians like Gibbon, Macaulay, Motley and Carlyle deal with their themes in ways that express their personality. While we do not ignore the style of

poetry or prose, whatever the subject, that which concerns us most in every case are the ideas. All this is true when we consider the judgment as a truth of urgent and permanent importance. Much confusion can be avoided if we distinguish between the symbolical and the actual, between the external drapery of description and the internal reality of the fact, between the dramatic setting of the scene and the scene itself, between the form in which the principles are conveyed and the principles themselves.

Apocalyptic writings like the book of Daniel and the Revelation set forth the truth of the judgment through pictures which are at times fanciful. The apostle Paul is more restrained in his references to this solemn truth; he writes in the style of prose while the other two are written in poetry. "The Last Judgment" by Michael Angelo is a magnificent canvas in the style of the Middle Ages, but it is too materialistic and spectacular to appeal to us. Its conception is crude and it does not make enough of the spiritual element. The same criticism applies to Dante's *Vision* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The external accompaniments of the judgment are accidental but the inner actuality of the judgment is essential. The judge who sits in a court room where the

furniture is plain and primitive, like "Judge Priest" in Irvin S. Cobb's books, does not declare a less conclusive sentence than another judge who is clad in ermine, surrounded by all the dignified ceremonials attaching to his high office. The important matter is that the decision is reached after careful sifting and weighing of evidence and that it is pronounced with authority so that it is executed.*

The judgment of God is the vindication of God as the sovereign ruler of the universe. The world order is rational and righteous, and although events may seem to contradict it, in the end it is justified. The justice of a cause is not always determined by success or failure. Christ on the Cross was adjudged a failure by his enemies, but succeeding centuries have radically reversed the decision of his contemporaries and given him the crown of honour. We do not hold with the friends of Job that misfortune means guilt. In that case, the Christian martyrs were sinners above all others, and the peoples of Belgium and Armenia are deep of-

* "When Christianity passed from its original Jewish surroundings to the Græco-Roman world the key was lost to the right interpretation of the language in which many of its doctrines were clothed. The Latin mind in particular tended to force the Eastern metaphors and picturesque language of the New Testament into a literalistic and legal mould. This especially affected the understanding of the eschatological system of thought."—C. W. Emmet in *Immortality*, edited by Streeter, p. 203.

fenders. Jesus set us right on this point when he said that those on whom the tower of Siloam fell and those others whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices were not worse sinners than those who escaped these sufferings.* The truth of the judgment is moral and spiritual, according to the law of cause and effect. The parable of the great surprise is a vivid picture of the underlying principle according to which judgment will be passed and executed. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." Paul made clear this same truth in direct words: "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The book of Revelation is equally explicit. Those who appeared before the great white throne "were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works." †

We can anticipate the nature of the divine judgment, knowing as we do the character of God's holiness and truth and the character of man with his limitations and defects. We often talk of the Fatherhood of God but do not reckon

* Luke 13:1-5.

† Matt. 25:40; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12.

Day of the Lord is an expressive phrase which announces the approaching judgment of God, to visit vengeance on the evil and to vindicate the righteous. In this connection, it is suggestive that one of the unwritten sayings of Jesus concerning himself is, "I am the Day."* Compare with this what is reported in the gospel of John: "For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind."† As we have already seen, Jesus has been judging the race from the time he began his ministry in Galilee up to this present; he will continue so to do to the end of the ages. It is worth recalling that for a number of years the officers of the German army and navy have drunk a toast to "The Day! The Day!" They were looking forward to the time when they would surprise the civilised world with their military vehemence, capture Paris, move on to London, send an ultimatum to Washington demanding surrender, then dictate terms to the whole world from Berlin and secure for themselves a central place in the sun. The dream has been a delusion. No weapons of physical force have ever yet been forged, strong enough to subdue any people who love

* Rendel Harris: A New Title for Jesus Christ. *The Expositor*, August, 1917.

† John 9:39.

science through sin. Those who are afflicted with this moral disease are incapable of fine discriminations. This is the tragedy of life and in this sense "the tragedy of history is the judgment of history." When the searchlight of God's fiery holiness is directed on the evil-doer, he either seeks for deliverance or sinks into lower depths of evil by his rejection of the light. Concerning such, the apostle writes: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness. Wherefore God gave them up unto a reprobate mind."* But the wrath of God is one expression of his love, as the enlightened conscience is quick to understand. This wrath is indeed "the consuming fire of his love." We may paint it in the lurid colours of hell as did the ancients or we may refer to it in the plain fashion of scientific language, but we cannot get away from the fact that the fate of the impenitent and the impious is one of unescapable desolation, not alone at the end of life but during its earthly career. Such is the conclusion of the "evangelical conscience" which is fully educated and influenced by the spirit of Christ. Judgment is not a final act but a continuous process. Every thought, desire and act leave impressions

* Rom. 1:18 ff.

on the brain cells and produce effects on character, which is the product of forces that are at work silently though surely. It thus follows that our destiny is being fixed by us through the thought that yields the act, through the act that forms the habit, through the habit that makes character, and through the character that decides the final fate of each individual. The profound moral significance of this life is expressed in the permanent principle: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." * Hence the urgency for immediate decision in using the opportunities at the time they present themselves. For instance, a young man may turn away from the offer of a higher education in order that he might seize a present benefit. In later life he may find himself in a position which demands the training which he rejected. He could doubtless cover his deficiency by hurried preparation at the eleventh hour, but he would nevertheless suffer from the handicap of early failure.

The pressure of the present for life or death was forcibly set forth by Jesus when he said: "Now is the judging of the world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." † Satan began to be bound as soon as Jesus began his

* Gal. 6:7.

† John 12:31.

ministry; and it was not difficult to decide what his end would be from the kind of acts which were being committed by him. Every day is a day of judgment. Christ is sifting the chaff from the wheat, and what the result shall be is only a question of time. When Paul said that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, he did not have in mind only some future crisis, but also a series of present events which would lead to the final climax. The latest book of the New Testament—the gospel of John—is very explicit on this point. “The story groups itself around one central motive, that of the judgment, the sifting out of men, effected by the coming of Christ.”* Men are considered according to their attitude to Christ, who is the light and also the way, the truth and the life. This then is the condemnation that the light has come, and those who loved darkness rather than light thereby gave proof that their deeds were evil.† “He who will judge men has himself been man. His authority rests not merely on divine prerogative, but on his victory over temptation, his knowledge of human needs and weaknesses, his brotherhood with men.”‡ So then virtue is its own reward and vice is its own doom.

* E. F. Scott: *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 17.

† John 3:19.

‡ E. F. Scott: *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 185.

Let us not think of the day of judgment in terms of chronology, as though it were some future event, "an unearthly *dies iræ*." It is a startlingly present reality. It is right near at hand, even at our very door; and it is a delusion to dismiss it because its features are not according to our preconceived notions. It was a folly similar to this which condemned those who rejected Jesus in the days of his flesh. They thought that the Messiah would come with earthly pomp and circumstance, and so they turned away from Jesus who came in the garb of a plain man, but whose works proved that he was both Son of man and Son of God. Well does Forsyth say that: "It is useless to put judgment at the close of history, if it have not a decisive place at the centre of history." * The judgment is the enemy of the sinner but the friend of the righteous. In the very nature of the case our present life is insufficient fully to work out "the issues of human character." The conviction that in this life there is a wide diversity between things as they are and things as they ought to be, quickens faith in the future life, where adjustments would be made and justice meted out in equity to all concerned. The inexplicable and intolerable contradictions of life compel us to hold that the sufferings of the

* *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*, p. 316.

innocent shall receive due recognition; and we say this not to offer "spurious consolations" to those in distress but to emphasise that here is the first of life and over there is the last of life. Indeed, "life's highest ends become sacramental for those who can look forward to eternity for their full attainment."* "What I most dread," said one, "is not a day of judgment, but a day of no judgment."

The thought of the judgment is frequently referred to in the Old Testament as "the Day of the Lord." It is used in different connections. At one time it refers to the coming of the conqueror to execute vengeance: "Behold, the Lord will come with fire, and his chariots shall be like the whirlwind; to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire."† The enemies of the Lord had then better beware while the faithful could justifiably rejoice because of the vindication of righteousness. "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. And the Lord shall roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be a refuge unto his

* Griffith Jones: *Faith and Immortality*, p. 202.

† Isaiah 66:15.

people.”* Those who are defiant are exhorted by Amos to reconsider their reckless ways: “Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! wherefore would ye have the day of the Lord? it is darkness and not light,” not only to the godless heathen but also to the chosen people, if they continue impenitent.† The laws of God will be executed impartially, and no punishment will be remitted. No one will be defrauded of his rights, however much he may have been defrauded of recognition at the hands of his fellowmen. Anne of Austria spoke a fiery sentence when she said to Richelieu: “My lord cardinal, God does not pay at the end of every week, but at last he pays.” This sentence recalls a memorable chapter in “The French Revolution” by Carlyle, who has written in the style of the early apocalyptists; the chapter is entitled, “Louis the Unforgotten.” It is one of the most searching expositions of the principle of judgment. “This tenth May day ‡ falls into the loathsome sick-bed; but dull, unnoticed there: for they that look out of the windows are quite darkened; the cistern-wheel moves discordant on its axis; Life like a spent steed, is panting towards the goal. In their re-

* Joel 3:14 ff.

† Amos 5:18.

‡ May 10, 1774.

mote apartments, Dauphin and Dauphiness stand road-ready; all grooms and equerries booted and spurred: waiting for some signal to escape the house of pestilence. And, hark! across the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, what sound is that; sound 'terrible and absolutely like thunder'? It is the rush of the whole court, rushing as in wager, to salute the new Sovereigns: Hail to your Majesties! The Dauphin and Dauphiness are king and queen! . . . The Louis that was, lies forsaken, a mass of abhorred clay; abandoned 'to some poor persons, and priests of the *Chapelle Ardente*,'—who make haste to put him 'in two lead coffins, pouring in abundant spirits of wine.' . . . Towards midnight the vaults of St. Denis receive their own: unwept by any eye. Him they crush down, and huddle underground, in this impatient way; him and his era of sin and tyranny and shame: for behold a new era is come; the future all the brighter that the past was base." This is what the Greeks call Nemesis, the certain retribution of sin. Nemesis is also the name of the goddess of fate. She is the avenger of wrong and she is represented in art as bearing in one hand a measuring rod, a sword or a scourge. These are the symbols of her mission, which is to mete out punishment with a fine sense of justice. The

Day of the Lord is an expressive phrase which announces the approaching judgment of God, to visit vengeance on the evil and to vindicate the righteous. In this connection, it is suggestive that one of the unwritten sayings of Jesus concerning himself is, "I am the Day." * Compare with this what is reported in the gospel of John: "For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind." † As we have already seen, Jesus has been judging the race from the time he began his ministry in Galilee up to this present; he will continue so to do to the end of the ages. It is worth recalling that for a number of years the officers of the German army and navy have drunk a toast to "The Day! The Day!" They were looking forward to the time when they would surprise the civilised world with their military vehemence, capture Paris, move on to London, send an ultimatum to Washington demanding surrender, then dictate terms to the whole world from Berlin and secure for themselves a central place in the sun. The dream has been a delusion. No weapons of physical force have ever yet been forged, strong enough to subdue any people who love

* Rendel Harris: A New Title for Jesus Christ. *The Expositor*, August, 1917.

† John 9:39.

liberty and are willing to pay with "the last full measure of devotion."

"But after the Day there's a price to pay
For the sleepers under the sod,
And He you have mocked for many a day—
Listen, and hear what He has to say:
'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,'
What can you say to God?" *

The last judgment will be final for each person; but it will also contain elements of surprise, as the parable of the great surprise so picturesquely teaches.† There will, however, be no reason for any one to appeal from the final verdict, as though it were faulty and should be reconsidered. One of the historic trials of recent times was that of Roger Casement, who was indicted and sentenced to death for treason. A full report is given in a large volume of 304 pages, edited by George H. Knott. Conclusive evidence is there furnished of Casement's guilt, made all the more decisive by the appeal proceedings. In a much deeper sense the last judgment will be final for each person. His own deeds shall be witnesses for him or against him; and the function of the Judge of all will not be to determine the fate so much as to declare it.

* Henry Chappell: *The Day and Other Poems*, p. 14.

† Matt. 25:31 ff.

At the close of our career we shall all be "found out," as we appear in the clear white light of God's searching and burning holiness. To the Christian the truth of the judgment in its manifold manifestations makes a sobering and stimulating appeal. "But ye are not in darkness," writes the apostle.* We understand the plan and purpose of our God in Jesus Christ, and are therefore enlightened to see what will be the outcome of evil and what the rewards of good. We are moreover awake to the dangers of indifference and the perils and pitfalls of iniquity, and are therefore free from moral and spiritual stupor. Let us therefore behave with seemly dignity. Let us be worthy of our privileges and responsibilities. Let our lives be marked by sobriety, vigilance and fidelity.

"Sometimes I wish that I might do
Just one grand deed and die,
And by that one grand deed reach up
To meet God in the sky.
But such is not thy way, O God,
Not such is thy decree,
But deed by deed, and tear by tear,
Our souls must climb to Thee,
As climbed the only Son of God
From manger unto Cross,
Who learned, through tears and bloody sweat,
To count this world but loss.

* 1 Thess. 5:4.

Who left the Virgin Mother's arms
To seek those arms of shame,
Outstretched upon the lonely hill
To which the darkness came.
As deed by deed, and tear by tear,
He climbed up to the height,
Each deed a splendid deed, each tear
A Jewel shining bright,
So grant us, Lord, the patient heart,
To climb the upward way,
Until we stand upon the height,
And see the perfect day." *

* "Patience," by "Woodbine Willie" in *Rough Rhymes of a Padre*, p. 49.

CHAPTER SIX: THE SECOND AD- VENT

CHAPTER SIX

THE SECOND ADVENT

HASTY conclusions are reached when all the facts are not considered. Life is complex and if we are adequately to understand it and be impartial in our judgments, we must consider it from many points of view. In place of fragmentary thinking, which is always superficial, we must think in terms of the whole of life. Much of what we regard as religious has really to do only with matters of rubric and ritual, with little bearing on questions of conduct. Commercial transactions, domestic pleasures and privations, social relations, political tasks, national and international activities—all have a direct relationship with the character of the individual and of society. We have taken our pleasures independently of our duties instead of letting them react on each other. We have attended to our religious functions in an exclusive fashion and now we see that they do not function in actual life. We have isolated them from other concerns much in the spirit of the ascetic who found satisfaction

in his austerities, which had no reference to the intellectual, emotional or social development, either of himself or of others. Our supreme need then is to have a passion for wholeness, which is holiness. We must get rid of incompleteness, which stamps the defects of its imperfections on all our thought and work, and leaves us with warped judgments as to the values of life and destiny. It is not surprising that under such lamentable circumstances, our outlook is tinged with pessimism and we are exposed to extremism with the inevitable harvest of uncertainty, doubt and error.

How differently did Jesus think of the present and the future. The secret of his optimism and his balanced outlook was his faith in the sovereignty of God who controls all of life. There is nothing, however obscure, which lies outside the purview of the divine concern. We are tortured by anxiety because our vision is clouded and we do not see how God in his consideration provides for the least and the lowest. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered," said Jesus, to impress on his disciples the thought of the gracious providence of the heavenly Father, whose presence is manifested in all occurrences.* Jesus took a complete and consistent view of everything and so he was

* Matt. 10:30.

sane and wholesome in all his considerations. He taught that God operated according to law, with freedom and spontaneity. We have studied history in vain if we cannot recognise that there have been new departures in God's activities. The outbreak of the war was a bolt out of the blue because the whole world, with the exception of one nation, was asleep and unprepared. We were not aware of what was going on in Germany, or rather we ignored the warnings of those who did know, and whom we regarded as fanatic alarmists. In like manner when we refer to the interventions of God, we are apt to think of them as contrary to reason because we did not reckon with all the forces operating beyond the horizon of our thought and knowledge. What we think of as catastrophic is due to our ignorance of some of the divine laws. As a matter of fact, the great principle which has consistently operated in the world has been that of development in view of ideal ends to be reached. When one achievement has been scored, the result may happen with cataclysmic suddenness, so far as we are concerned. But on investigation we find that there has been steady preparation for it. Think of the tragic upheavals in Russia, what Dillon in his great book aptly terms "*The Eclipse of Russia*," which is the title of his searching and luminous study of

the causes which have worked like noxious weeds in that benighted and desolate land. Recall the radical upturning in China, when a powerful dynasty was driven into defeat and a new order introduced into a nation which had been obstinately conservative for centuries. We can profitably read history only as we regard deviations and interventions not as exceptions to the prevailing law of evolutionary growth but as due to the inevitable changes which make for progress. Some of the parables of Jesus—like the sower, the wheat and the tares, the mustard seed—represent the Kingdom of God as advancing according to the law of progressive development. Other parables like the ten virgins, and the talents, which expose the indifference of men due to the slow arrival of the Kingdom, show that its coming must needs be with suddenness. Biologists tell us that “evolution does not only take place by infinitesimal gradations but sometimes at least by distinct steps, some large and others small.” Some conversions are startlingly sudden, like that of the apostle Paul and of other cases witnessed at our mission stations. These instances can be explained only as we give place to the direct workings of God. However much we may try to explain away the marvel of the first advent, we are compelled to acknowledge that when Jesus Christ was born,

a new order of human life was established in the world.

Let us beware lest our presuppositions and prejudices warp our judgment. When Jesus first came at the Incarnation, many were not prepared nor willing to receive him because he was unlike their ideas of the Messiah. They thus missed the greatest blessings and crucified him when they should have crowned him. So has it been at all the great crises in history, when Christ surely manifested his presence. But how few were ready to salute these manifestations as heralds of the king. We are still looking in wrong places, making erroneous calculations and indulging in false speculations. We shall certainly be disappointed and find that Christ will not come as we think he would, according to our interpretations of his promise. The early Christians were influenced by Jewish apocalyptic hopes which were expressed in the terms of the thought of their day. The civilisation of that time was corrupt beyond description and the Christians held that it would soon be destroyed. They looked for a literal coming again of Christ in the skies, when he would achieve a victory of physical force. They believed that there was no hope for the world which lay in the hands of the evil one, and they regarded all attempts to save the world as

futile. They rather directed their energies in saving one here and another there, and getting them into the church so that they might be prepared to meet the Lord at the hour of his fiery advent. Their expectations were repeatedly set aside, but such was the persistency of their belief as to the manner of his coming that they never thought of considering that perchance Christ would come in some other way. They did not understand that there was a growth in the conceptions concerning his coming. The materialistic setting in the synoptic gospels and the earlier epistles of Paul were to be completed by the more spiritual ideas in the later writings, especially that of the gospel of John. The individualistic emphasis, which led them to save individuals as brands from the burning, must be supplemented by the universalistic emphasis, which contemplates the redemption of the whole world. Paul had this larger outlook when he declared that the whole creation was groaning and travailing in pain waiting to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." The climax would then be reached when the whole world is brought into subjection to Jesus Christ and every knee shall bow before him in adoration, praise, gratitude and service.* Such a

* Rom. 8:20; Phil. 2:10.

view implied that the Spirit of Christ would penetrate every state of society, and influence every type of civilisation, and direct the course of human activities at every stage and crisis in history. This prophetic forecast is being gradually fulfilled but the end is not yet, when Christ shall put all his enemies under his feet and reign in the undisputed supremacy of his meritorious glory.

Those who declare that the world is getting worse are uttering a slander against the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such a pessimistic view is out of all harmony with the facts of history. The record of the continued triumphs of Jesus throughout the world is a testimony that compels attention. Take, for instance, the institution of slavery. It existed in the first century without any protest and was even regarded as a necessity by Aristotle, who taught that some are born slaves and should so continue. Slavery yet exists in one form or another as in the industrial world; but we are sensitive about it and steps are constantly being taken with a view to wiping out this disgrace. The very fact that we feel as we do concerning the social and commercial abuses is a proof that sentiment is strong, and when it crystallises, the time for united action will arrive and the forces of darkness shall be defeated and destroyed.

We cannot see in these advances the influence of the Spirit of Christ and the steady increase of his control over life, if we continue to read prophecy and apocalypse backwards, without any reference to the historical circumstances under which they were given. On the other hand, if we grasp the moral and spiritual principles which underlie the symbolical representation of the coming of Christ, we shall rejoice in the truth that the promise of our Lord has been repeatedly fulfilled during the centuries. There is no excuse for modern Christians to ignore the history of Christianity and repeat the errors of those of an early age, who insisted on treating the incidental expressions of the truth having equal importance with the essential truth itself. We must read the sacred writings in their historical connections and note the gradual unfolding of the revelation of God's grace. We will then compare Scripture with Scripture in its proper context and not read into the earlier portions what belongs only to the later passages. We must further distinguish between history and parable, between poetry and prose, between prophecy and apocalypse. The fundamental truths of sin and salvation can be understood by the way-faring man, even by those of elementary intelligence, but the deeper truths can be rightly interpreted only by those who

are familiar with history and scholarly research and who have the trained mind and the consecrated spirit to see and expound the course of life which is directed in accord with the whole will of God. Any other method of approach is bound to produce confusion worse confounded and to increase the alarmist and pessimistic utterances of prophets falsely so called, who are wrong both in their premises and their conclusions.

Jesus Christ is the Coming One, but we regard his coming as progressive and not to be confined to any single event. This is really the teaching of the Scriptures, when taken in all their bearings and connections. The book of Revelation opens with the declaration, "Behold He cometh." The verb is in the "progressive present," which "denotes action in progress." * The sentence may then be translated, "Behold, he is coming." The seer beheld "the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." † It was in process of descent and its career has not yet ended and will not until "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." We saw in a previous chapter that the "day of the Lord" was regarded by the Old Testament writers as a

* Burton: *New Testament Moods and Tenses*, p. 7.

† Rev. 1:7; 21:10.

day of doom as well as of deliverance. The prophets were confident that however bitter the struggle and arduous the conflict, the outcome would be the triumph of righteousness and the honour of God. Their outlook was thus radiant with the glory of God, and the hope of a good time coming gave them full confidence and comfort, in spite of the present distress. This Messianic hope was the background of the New Testament teaching. The disciples of Christ were greatly sustained by the hope of his coming and they looked forward not only to an immediate return but also to an appearance that would be dramatic and spectacular. They were however mistaken as to the manner of the coming, and we can see how the process of adjustment went on in the mind of Paul. The enthusiastic note as to the imminent return in the first epistle to the Thessalonians is superseded by the more subdued but not less intense note in the epistle to the Ephesians. The materialistic drapery has been exchanged for a more spiritual setting, which only enhances the fact of the blessed Coming. In I Thessalonians we read, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."* This apocalyptic language is replaced by the

* Chap. 4:16.

prophetic utterance that all things shall be summed up in Christ, in whom racial distinctions have been abolished and who is "all and in all." * The Coming is not to be cataclysmic but continuous and constructive, and each stage will register the growth of the church, which is the body of Christ and which shall continue to advance and expand "till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." † The gospel of John emphasises almost exclusively the spiritual coming of Christ through the second Paraclete, after the departure of him who was the first Paraclete. Indeed, the physical coming in the synoptic gospels is ignored in favour of the spiritual advent of the Holy Spirit, whose manifestations will be as varied and as enriching as the most ardent seer could contemplate. In one sense, the coming of Christ refers to "his presence in the church and in the hearts of believers." ‡ This advent may thus be regarded as a series of experiences which grow in depth and intensity according as the life of each one is "hid with Christ in God." In yet another sense, he has

* Eph. chaps. 1 and 2.

† Eph. 4:13.

‡ Inge in *Cambridge Biblical Essays*, edited by Swete, p. 284.

come again and again at the great crises and turning points in the history of the world. These comings have been not only to judgment but also for the vindication and triumph of the principles of justice and righteousness. "There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power."* Recall how this prophetic promise was repeatedly fulfilled during the immediate future. When he appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, it was a victory of divine power over the menace and might of evil. When the Holy Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost, the experiences of ecstatic exultation and jubilation enabled the believers to enter through the open doors for the evangelisation of the world. When the faithful, at the close of their earthly career, passed through the portals of death the blessed Christ received them unto himself with a welcome into the Father's house of many mansions. May we not see a further fulfilment of this word at the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, which was truly a judgment of God on the impious and impenitent people?

Looking down the years from the first century, we see how the majesty and truth of Christ were frequently manifested, although there

* Mark 9:1 f.

were many who did not recognise it as such at the time. When the Teutonic Goths and Vandals destroyed the Roman Empire in the fourth century, it was made possible by the political and social corruptions within. These were due, in the last analysis, to the debased and debasing view of womanhood, which fatally reacted on every stratum of society. The fall of Constantinople before the Mohammedan invaders in the fifteenth century was a divine judgment upon the fearful evils of Christendom. The overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy at the French Revolution was a divine declaration that kings rule for the benefit of the people and that failure to do so will be visited with desolation. The passing away of the Manchus by the abdication of the last Chinese emperor in 1912 was a demonstration to the Oriental world, as the dramatic deposition and execution of Nicholas II was to the Occidental world, that the era of tyrannical militarism will surely close. The world upheaval in the midst of which we are living is clearly the prelude to the coming of Christ on a far larger scale than has ever been possible at any of the previous departures in the course of the world's history. When we think of the Protestant Reformation and the awakening of the middle-class conscience; of the Puritan movement and the protest for

liberty of conscience; of the Evangelical Revival and the beginnings of the democratisation of the world, which is only now finding earnest supporters, we can realise that gradually, certainly, continuously Christ has been coming through the divers agencies which have furthered the Kingdom of God. Only let us remember that the advances have been determined and directed from above and not from below; and that what we witness has not been a mere evolution but due to a series of divine interventions as the necessities demanded. Here let us understand that an intervention is not an interruption which sets aside the order of the universe. It is rather the coming of God to the relief of those who are pressed on every side and who would go under without the merciful help of the Redeemer. After every explanation is submitted, we must fall back on the principle enunciated by the prophet: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4.6).

We can justifiably use the words of Jesus: "Thou shalt see greater things than these," with reference to the more heroic adventures and advances of the human race towards the City of God.* Do not such assurances stimu-

* John 1:50.

late us to continue faithful and devoted to him who is destined to be Lord of all? Such a conviction gives us confidence in doing our tasks, comfort in the sore hours of distress and contentment in the patient endurance unto the victorious end. It further deepens our sense of responsibility, for whatever is done now shall surely bear fruit in later days. It also enhances the dignity of our lives, increases the extent of our resources and enriches the output of our energies. The future thus reacts on us and redeems us from everything that is trivial and transitory. We have the witness of the Spirit that we are children of God, and therefore we draw the conclusion that, "if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him."* He who began a great moral and spiritual movement, looking towards the complete redemption of all mankind will certainly see it thoroughly accomplished.

"For the only God that a true man trusts
Is the God that sees it through."

What then should be our attitude? There were four classes among the people who witnessed the triumphal procession into Jerusa-

* Rom. 8:16.

lem. The *thoughtless* joined with the exultant crowd who for the time being were having their own way; they were among the curious idlers who were carried away with the majority on the wave of emotionalism. But they had no convictions on the subject and were indifferently interested in the spread of the Kingdom of Christ. The *prejudiced* were those who had already made up their minds and who would not reconsider their positions, even when new facts urged them to do so; it must be according to their ideas or not at all. Others again were *neutral* and did not care to decide either way; when great issues are pending, such people are of no value and their non-committal attitude is a form of cowardice. There were finally the *thoughtful*, who were ready to revise their conclusions as truth warranted their doing. These last are found in every age and land. They take a large view of the progress of the Kingdom and espouse its cause in a spirit of hearty consecration, willing to do their full share in the work and wait for further developments, watching for the signs of Christ's appearance as they who look for the morning. These alone have the qualities of enduring loyalty and unswerving fidelity and are ready for the coming of the King, whenever it may be and whatever may be the circumstances.

CHAPTER SEVEN: IMMORTALITY

CHAPTER SEVEN

IMMORTALITY

THERE are strange reverses in thought and life which show that the scientist is often mistaken when he undertakes the rôle of a prophet. The winds of God cannot be controlled by any person and their comings and goings can be interpreted only by the seer of the spiritual life. Not long since the psychologists gravely announced that the day of revivals was over, as though that settled the matter. But the ink was hardly dry before their reports were contradicted by the Welsh Revival, which upturned all their laboured conclusions. For the last thirty or forty years Christian people have lived without any vital relationship to the world beyond, and the beliefs in God and immortality sat very lightly on them. Even preachers were baffled, and, except for a conventional sermon on heaven suggested by the death of some member of the congregation, the whole subject was ignored. It probably sounded unselfish when people confessed that their supreme concern was to do their duty to the limit

of their energy here and now, and that they were satisfied to leave all speculations and thoughts of the future out of their calculations. They would trust God, assured that "the Judge of all the earth will do right." But this was only a pious evasion. It is true that thoughts of the future have at times had a morbid effect. This was due to the ascetic view of life, which regarded the present life as essentially evil, and from which a speedy deliverance would be a boon. It is a different question whether those who held such an unearthly creed were willing to stand the test and depart from this vale of tears. Many of the hymns dealing with the future life are so pagan in sentiment that they should be severely censored or discarded in the interest of a wholesome and vital Christianity. The attitude of indifference or of negation has finally disappeared; and many are wistfully asking for some word of assurance as to the fate of their loved ones who were so abruptly taken from their homes, and who fell so tragically, albeit heroically, on various fields of battle.

Much of the scepticism was largely due to the methods of study of the subject. Scientists and psychologists have handled only limited data. The questionnaire which is so popular with them is a very inadequate way of getting at the beliefs or non-beliefs of people. Even those

with the required mental discipline are not always able to set down clearly and coherently the factors of their religious experience. Most men believe much more than they think they do; others are curiously reticent as to their inner life; and it often happens that those who are chiefly heard from are the garrulous, who are as superficial as they are voluble. A book like *The Belief in God and Immortality*, by Leuba, is seriously marred by onesidedness. He places almost exclusive reliance on those who negate the faith in immortality and makes hardly any reference to those who affirm such a faith. In the interest of accuracy, it is more important to take the continuous and consistent testimony of history, with the forward-looking attitude, than to accept the verdicts of specialists, whose very specialisation has narrowed their horizon. We should give a larger setting to the truth of the future life so that it will appeal to the intelligence and heart of believing men and women, and bring courage and comfort to those who are distracted by the loss of loved ones.

There are two views about the relation of the body to the mind. The materialist holds that the mind is the product of the body and that when the body dissolves by death the mind also ceases to act. The idealist contends that the mind controls the body and is independent of it,

and that on occasion it could organise for itself a spiritual body as a medium of communication. Melancholia, for instance, is only in part due to physical conditions, for it is really caused by some mental rupture. Depression due to grief has been known to deplete physical energy while happiness has brought exhilaration. Sufferers from "shell-shock" have been cured by mental suggestion or hypnotism, which is being increasingly regarded as an "ideal anæsthetic," other things being equal. The exercise of thought is however only one of the functions of personality, which is a threefold unity of mind, emotion and will. It is moreover through consciousness that relations are established between one personality and another. Now, consciousness is the psychic energy which is directed by the will in such ways as will accomplish its ends. Where the will is governed by high ideals, the reactions on oneself make for noble character. And character, whatever its quality, is the distinguishing and determining feature of personality. When Jesus asked: "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" he was insisting on the immeasurable worth and the infinite possibilities of personality.* He was not thinking of human life as reaching its end and find-

* Mark 8:36.

ing its completion during its earthly career. He was rather contemplating the continuity of life after and beyond the incident of death, and he was enforcing its significance in fellowship with the eternal God.

The final proof of immortality is not found in logic but in life. Let it be granted that in the last analysis it is a matter of faith, but then faith is in religion what the hypothesis is in science. We start out with the inference of immortality and then we proceed to find confirmations of it in the facts of life. We thus discover that the wisest and soberest of every age have endorsed the truth of immortality because they have experienced its quickening reality. From Job to Plato, from Aristotle through Kant and Spinoza to Eucken and Bergson, and including poets like Homer, Dante, Milton, Wordsworth, Browning, Whittier and Emerson, we find confirmation of the assurance of immortality. They would all readily accept, as the expression of their conviction, the words of Tennyson in his "In Memoriam," which nobly sets forth the spiritual triumph of humanity:

"Thou wilt not leave us in the dust,
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die,
And Thou hadst made him, Thou art just."

Eternity is generally interpreted in a materialistic sense, with reference to time. The deeper meaning of this word and of its related expression of "eternal" refers to worth on a spiritual basis. The eternal and the temporal are contrasted from the standpoint of values, where the apostle says: "The world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."* This abiding is not in the sense of endless existence but of constancy and stability through fellowship with God and fidelity to him. "Eternal life," says Forsyth, "is much more than contact; it is living communion with spiritual and eternal reality."† The desire for immortality is not for continuance so much as for completion. When we think of the structure of human life and the limitations under which it is being built, even where the conditions are the most favourable, we have to confess that the terms of the contract are unsatisfactory because there is not sufficient time to finish the temple of the soul here on earth. The best that can be done is to lay the foundation and perchance to erect a room or two; but the finer work cannot be done here because we do not have the necessary

* 1 John 2:17.

† Forsyth: *This Life and the Next*, p. 62. ,

equipment. Many doctors blunder and lives are sacrificed because of their ignorance or because they do not have the best facilities to diagnose disease or to perform their operations. It is the misfortune of those afflicted by reason of the medical man's handicap. In like manner, the defects and shortcomings of our earthly life make it impossible for us to achieve perfection. The very fact of limitation is an argument for a state of life which will be free from this embarrassment. The "moral rebound" of faith in immortality not only deepens our sense of responsibility to live worthily as immortals, but it also heartens us to do our best here, because an opportunity, better than our best thus far, will be granted to us in the happy beyond. We can then think with serene calm on the imperfection, the injustice and even the inconsistencies of life, where they are the result of uncontrollable forces. Those who have been bereaved can cease to regret that things might have been otherwise because of the assured hope of that better time when the obstruction will be removed, the focus readjusted, the ignorance cancelled, the wrong righted and adequate recognition be given. Abt Vogler comforts himself that his palace of music is not really gone; but "what was, shall be."

“Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable
Name?

Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with
hands!

What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the
same?

Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy
power expands?

There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall
live as before;

The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much
good more;

On the earth the broken arcs: in the heaven a per-
fect round.”

Our conscious life moreover is not all there is of it. Around the centre there is an illimitable fringe which yet remains to be discovered. Just as our eyes see more than is communicated by the mind at the time; and just as our ears hear more than we are listening to, so there is a larger circle which we must encompass and possess, and there are depths beyond depths in the profound recesses of our being, in what is known as the subliminal consciousness, which no plummet has yet sounded. This region which relates to the sublime in personality only deepens our instinct of immortality, reminding us:

“And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond—
Still leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea.”

Recognise this fact and we can well understand the superiority of the spiritual over the mental, just as it is higher than the physical. The word "spiritual" has sometimes been interpreted as though it were a refinement of the mental. We should rather understand it as a quality made possible by the inspiration of God and deepened by communion with him. Self-consciousness is thus illuminated and enriched by God-consciousness, and we have its perfect illustration in the character of Jesus Christ, in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." * The soul which enjoys mutual fellowship with God grows in closer likeness to the divine, and increases the capacity for the practice of the presence of God, and so pursues the path to perfection, regardless of death. He who has thus laid hold of God and who has been laid hold of by God can never be cast as rubbish to the void, least of all when the flower is about to bloom into the beauty of the endless day. The words of Jesus are more to the point: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my Father's hand." † It is concerning this unbreakable union that

* Col. 2:9.

† John 10:27f.

the apostle Paul delivered his ecstatic utterance in a spirit of triumphant jubilation: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written,

'For thy sake we are killed all the day long:
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'

Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." * How irrational then to suppose that an individual who has been receiving larger and yet larger accessions of spiritual enduement and experience, who has been steadily advancing towards the sublime light, and whose life is maturing after the fashion of the divine countenance—yes, how absurd to think that such a career would be abruptly and rudely checked by death. The onward pace of progress will not thus be terminated. It would be an insult to the good God whom we call "Our Father in heaven," to permit the

* Rom. 8:35 ff.

thought that when we are about to enter through the portals of death into the palace of the King, we would be pushed back and turned out, to receive, in recognition of our industry and fidelity, nothing but the Dead Sea apples of disparagement and disappointment. Nay, verily we can say in the words of Lilian Leveridge:

“For whate’er befalls, Love conquers all,
And Death shall not prevail.” *

Great as are the possibilities in this life, the best reach only a rudimentary state. These elect and select spirits of the ages acknowledge that they are but children picking up pebbles on the ocean front, while the tides come and go. A life comes to fruition not here but hereafter. The law of growth is not withdrawn at death but continues to work even more excellently yonder. At that hour of change, “the life will be raised not reversed,” as it becomes emancipated from the trammels of the flesh and is promoted into the higher regions of life for further advances. Their departure hence makes room on earth for other probationers who are to learn and practice the elementary lessons touching truth and godliness. This forward look which is inspired by love expresses an eager desire not for compensation but for com-

* *Over the Hills of Home and Other Poems*, p. 52.

pletion. A continuation of life is necessary in order that a fair and square chance might be given to every one. What shall we say of the worthy poor whose lives have been an incessant conflict, with never a rift of relief; what about the sick and the afflicted who have seen only some slight silver lining in the cloud of darkness, which continuously remained over them; what of those who have been the innocent prey of injustice and cruelty, and who were cut short without any recognition of their rights and privileges; what of the many who tried but never triumphed, who struggled but never succeeded, who hoped but were never helped; what shall we say of the millions who have fallen in this war and whose mortal remains lie in sublime anonymity in Flanders fields, in Gallipoli trenches, under the Egyptian sun, and in the exposure of No Man's Land? It would be a sheer mockery to say to all these martyrs of the nations and the generations that their lives of pioneering and privation have gone to break new ground for succeeding ages, and that they should therefore be satisfied with the immortality of influence. Far better to say with Browning's Rabbi Ben Ezra:

"The best is yet to be,

The last of life, for which the first was made:

Our times are in his hand
Who saith, 'A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be
afraid!'

.
But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moulded men;
And since, not even when the whirl was worst,
Did I—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake thy
thirst:

So, take and use thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the
aim!
My times be in thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the
same!"

The recourse which some people are having to spiritualism and to séances to get into communication with their dead, is a painful reminder that the church has failed to satisfy the yearnings of those who desire more light. All that is obtained through mediums are only "sensuous indications," which are open to different interpretations. There is a better way by which we can obtain assurance. Prayer is the *open sesame* into all mysteries. It brings us

into direct relations with God, whereby we establish a bond between the seen and the unseen. We seek God in the urgent crisis of life when we are burdened down beyond all endurance and when the strain of sorrow and loss is at the breaking point. He is equally able to help us when the light is burning low because the light of our heart's love has gone out. None of us really desire the return of our loved ones. When we soberly consider the matter, we would also see that any communication that we might have with them through a medium must be limited and indirect and therefore unsatisfactory. In the deep experiences of life we do not want any strangers around, and yet such must be necessary if we would reach our beloved through spiritualistic mediators. To be so near and yet so far from our loved ones would not only be tantalising but it would open the wound instead of pouring any balm on it. On the other hand, through prayer we receive a deeper knowledge of the love and kindness of God, who gives us the assurance that all is well with our loved ones in that fair land of endless day, and that we shall greet them in the morning of reunion blessedness. Meanwhile, it is enough to know that they are in Christ's safe keeping; and he is the Lord of life. The comforting lines

of Francis St. Vincent Morris addressed to a friend bereaved by the war, are very touching, the more so as this poet himself was killed in action:

“Because he died that others might not die . . .
Comfort, Sad Heart! Beyond that little grave
Rests an immortal soul in God’s repose:
‘Others he saved: himself he could not save.’

This was the task he chose.
Your love is crucified on that small cross,
That lonely Sentinel where he has trod
Leaving thereon all trace of grief and loss.

.

And then your love
Will rise to find him where he waits above
Before the throne of God.”

We trust Christ now when in the straits of sin and in the coils of conflict. He delivers us and gives us strength to master temptation and to resist evil. Can we not trust him to guide our dear ones? Is it not even our privilege to pray to Christ for them as assuredly they are making intercession for us? We tread on delicate ground when we touch on this subject; but we have the encouragement to pray for everything in which we are deeply and seriously interested. “In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto

God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts in Christ Jesus." * Surely, if prayer is the God-ordained way for the removal of sorrow and anguish, why may it not be used when the heart is deeply crushed as in the season of bereavement? This is not a question for dogma to decide but for the reason enlightened by Christ, who enables us to consider the full range of the mind and the heart of the Eternal. There is nothing in the New Testament to discourage nor to encourage prayer for our beloved dead; but it magnifies the truth of the communion of saints, which defies the article and incident of death. It moreover gives a larger perspective and sway to the exercise of prayer. We believe that nothing is lost by death. A family does not become smaller when any member leaves the paternal roof to establish a home of his own, either in the same town or at the other end of the world. In like manner, death separates but does not sever the ties which bind every several member to each other. There may be a "vacant chair," but the child in Wordsworth's poem was right when she declared "we are seven," although "two are in heaven." The family continues intact, for those who have crossed the flood are still our very own, and we shall yet meet to part no

* Phil. 4:6.

more. In the interval, between the sorrowful “now” and the gladsome “then,” we receive strength from the Lord Christ, and so will we continue in patient waiting and diligent working, until the day dawns and these shadows flee away.

“There is no death,—
They only truly live
Who pass into the life beyond, and see
This earth is but a school preparative
For larger ministry.

We call them ‘dead,’—
But they look back and smile
At our dead living in the bonds of flesh,
And do rejoice that, in so short a while,
Our souls will slip the leash.

There is no death
To those whose hearts are set
On higher things than this life doth afford;
How shall their passing leave one least regret,
Who go to join their Lord?” *

* Oxenham: *The Vision Splendid*, p. 134.



CHAPTER EIGHT: HEAVEN

CHAPTER EIGHT

HEAVEN

WHEN we talk of death there is frequently an element of despair. It seems as though it were impossible to bring any message of comfort to those who feel the sense of loss. And yet the Christian view of human life is so elevating that those who accept it need not be deprived of the inspiration of faith which enables them to think of the future with calmness and confidence. It was the thought of refreshment that Jesus had in mind when he referred to death as sleep. Those who die in the Lord are not asleep but very much alive. Indeed, they are more alive to a larger set of interests than are we who are shadows and who shadows pursue. Our conception of the character of God gives us assurance of the unity and the continuity of life, which even death cannot break up. We thus believe not only in the conservation of energy but also in the conservation of value and the "augmentation of value." No good is de-

stroyed but its worth is increased. When a life is cut short by death, we conclude that a ministry of usefulness has ceased. Viewing it from our limited standpoint we are right; but we cannot say that all the service for good which such a life might render has also ended. Think of our Lord's life of only three and thirty years. In one sense it had an abrupt and untimely ending. But through his death on the cross he accomplished far more for the entire human race than if he had continued to live to a ripe old age and made rich contributions to philosophy and religion. What makes this war so disastrous is the extravagant sacrifice of youth full of rare promise. This very fact, however, makes their death all the more precious and calls on us who are left behind to rededicate ourselves to the cause of freedom, for which these many eager lives were sacredly laid on the altars of patriotism and humanity. The crosses in Flanders fields and elsewhere mark the places where rest only the mortal remains of our heroes. These valiant ones truly speak to us through such stirring sights, and they say in the words of Colonel McCrae, M.D.:

“Take up our quarrel with the foe!
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch: be yours to hold it high!
If ye break faith with us who die,

We shall not sleep, though poppies blow
In Flanders fields."

This world and the next are not competitive but complementary. Our life here has a bearing on the life hereafter. Physical decay has often been accompanied by spiritual rejuvenescence and renewal. So thought the apostle Paul as he reviewed his life of pressure and persecution, which was also a life of deliverance and liberty. He was thus able to say with exultation of spirit: "Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."* He was looking to the future not for rewards so much as for results which were the outcome of earnest efforts. He treated the things of this life with "unselfish indifference." He was interested in what was taking place in a disinterested manner. No one could have charged him with neglecting his duties. He repeatedly insisted that here is the field of consecrated labour but that the full harvest could be garnered only yonder. When he thought of the other world of joy and glory, it brought stim-

* 2 Cor. 4:17 f.

ulus to him, to work in this present in ways that would make him worthy of the coming grandeur. Some earnest folk have allowed themselves to become so absorbed in the future that they have lost all sense of perspective and they assume an unhealthy and cowardly attitude towards present responsibilities. Such a type of other-worldliness has done damage to character and has exercised a militating influence. It must not be confused with the other-worldliness of the New Testament, which led those who accepted it to lay all the greater stress on the duties of their own times.

It is a fact of history that when the church was other-worldly and devoted to social and spiritual obligations, it did more to raise the moral standards of the world than when the church was worldly and busied itself with the passing show. Think of Augustine and his vision of the City of God when Rome was being sacked by the Vandals; think of John Calvin and his influence in Geneva which remains even to this day; think of John Knox and his power over Scotland; think of Oliver Cromwell and his reform programmes for England; think of the Pilgrim Fathers and the foundations which they laid for American democracy; think of John Wesley and the cleansing of private and public life. All these leaders were inspired

in their undertakings by their spirit of other-worldliness, which gave them a vision of the possibilities of this life and of its immortal destiny. When Professor Leuba states that "the modern belief in immortality costs more than it is worth," and quotes from his questionnaire in support of this shortsighted conclusion, he shows that his reading of history and biography has been biased and therefore unscientific.* A far better psychologist, President G. Stanley Hall, after reviewing considerable data, states: "One thing, however, is certain, viz., that every degree, even the slightest, of increased faith in a future life of rewards and punishments for the soul gives inestimable support to morality."† In a different place he writes: "No one who knows the human heart can have patience with those who, because there are a few pure and lofty souls that can live out the best within them without the aid of hope or fear for the future, argue that more harm than good was done by these immense powers to stimulate righteousness and repress evil."

We can partly understand why interest in the future life has waned. The conventional idea of heaven made it a monotonous and tiresome

* Leuba: *The Belief in God and Immortality*, p. 291.

† Hall: *Jesus the Christ, in the Light of Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 701.

place. It was also unreal and did not provide for the many-sidedness of life. Much as people like music, there is a limit to this pleasure. Psalm singing and palm waving are not the only employment of the redeemed. To think so would be as futile as the North American Indian who looked forward to his happy hunting grounds in the beyond. It is rather a life of quiet joy and sober restfulness, of growth and work, of variety and progress, and of a character that would appeal to all sorts of temperaments. The heaven of much popular thinking was too much influenced by dogmatic theology and ecclesiastical pronouncements. The tests were creedal and not ethical, and many were excommunicated from the church and also from heaven, which in the thought of these doctrinaires was a sort of glorified church assembly. Ideas of a disembodied state and of ghostly associations also had a dehumanising effect on life; and there were many Protestants who thought of the future in the ascetic and irrational way of Roman Catholics. It is not surprising that under these unworthy circumstances, some were scared and the more thoughtful were repelled and decided to ignore all considerations of the future life.

How different to all this is the teaching of Jesus and his apostles. "In my Father's house

are many mansions,"* said the Master. He would have us understand that there is room for every one and that heaven is home. This same idea was expressed by John when he wrote: "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him."† The communion there will then be on a fraternal basis. Paul was equally clear: "We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens."‡ The building which is to be ours is a home. A boarding-house is not a home, however congenial may be the associations. What gives the real charm to home is the presence of our loved ones. Home thus is a place of protection, where the parents guard and guide the children and supervise their growth in the course of the years. It is a place of welcome, where we are understood and no suspicion poisons the atmosphere of hearty love. It is the place of rest and peace for the tired and weary; of discipline and development of character for both young and old; of joy and happiness which transcends any-

* John 14:2.

† 1 John 3:2.

‡ 2 Cor. 5:1.

thing elsewhere on earth. Truly, there's no place like home, however humble and obscure, where we receive the inspirations, the consolations and the benefactions of life. What a tremendous uplift to our thought and outlook that we can regard heaven as home. There is room for all the members of the Father's family and freedom for every variety of talent and activity. The more developed do not keep to themselves exclusively but aid those who are not as advanced.

We further think of heaven as the place of absolute values. Those who belong to that country of the redeemed enjoy love which is the absolute and perfect value, and which is transmitted from God through Jesus Christ, the Son of his everlasting love. "Heaven seems most real as a moral open-air, where every breath is an inspiration, and every pulse a healthy joy, where no thoughts from within us find breath but those of obedience and praise, and all our passions and aspirations are of the will of God."* Those who depart this life do not have to go to any intermediate state to fit themselves for heaven. It is the pleasure of the redeemed, in that exhilarating atmosphere, to take in hand the new arrivals and guide them

* G. A. Smith: *The Book of Isaiah* (Expositor's Bible), Vol. I, 185.

into larger moral and spiritual relationships and attainments. How gratifying to know that heaven is a place of growth towards a richer life. There everything is real and we shall be happily free from the impious unrealities and hypocrisies which envelop so much of our present life. Our supreme need after death will not be "purging but enriching." When we leave behind us the imperfect and defective conditions which made labor here so much of a strain, we shall find ourselves in a climate free from all the disagreeable elements of struggle and competition, and which offer opportunities for "reinforcement, and enrichment, and intensity of life beyond the grave as no language can describe, no imagination picture forth."* All advance will thus be made under circumstances which are free from opposition but charged with co-operation from the company of celestial encouragers. It is furthermore a life of happy fellowship and not of isolated individualism. Differences will not be regarded as obstacles to intercourse but as helps to enlarge the horizon of every one, as they travel towards the beatific vision of ineffable perfection and bliss in the complete realisation of the divine presence.

The vision of the divine goodness, truth and

* E. Griffith-Jones: *Faith and Immortality*, p. 305.

beauty has been incarnated in Jesus Christ. How few have had any adequate realisation of it; and in so far as this is so, how few have really found themselves and know themselves as they entered into communion with God. But even within limitations it is the vision of God that we most sorely need to-day, and it is for lack of it that we have been plunged into this devastating war. The vision of God is a vision of "wholeness in thought and life," and herein we are found wanting. The fact that previous generations have also fallen short of the standards of purity and justice does not extenuate us but rather condemns us the more severely. "That servant who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."* And again, "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them."† The thought that perfect realisation of the vision is not attainable here leads us to conclude that it shall be realised "over there." This however is not a sop to satisfy us with mediocre achievements. We should always do our best and leave the unfinished residue to the disposal of God. What then shall we say of those who deliberately turn away from the truth and who remain impenitent

* Luke 12:47.

† John 13:17.

in spite of urgent appeals? Their progress downwards in miserable deterioration offers to them "a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries." *

The relationship between the heavenly company and their kindred on earth is vitally enduring. After reviewing the exploits of the heroes and heroines of faith, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that we are encompassed by this cloud of witnesses, who challenge us to endurance and fidelity that should even outrival their own. He then goes on to say: "Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant."† Blessed be God, our fellowship with the "festal assembly" can be actualised and realised now, and we need not be cut off from our dear ones who have been translated to the land that is fairer than day. Charles Wesley celebrated this experience in a hymn which is well known:

* Heb. 10:27.

† Heb. 12:22 ff.

"Come let us join our friends above
That have obtained the prize,
And on the eagle wings of love
To joys celestial rise:
Let all the saints terrestrial sing,
With those to glory gone;
For all the servants of our King,
In earth and heaven are one."

This then is the true communion of saints. This is the fellowship of kindred spirits. This is the union between loved ones, here and there, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Heaven must not be separated from earth in any arbitrary way. John Oxenham refers to the custom of the early church in celebrating the death days of the martyrs as birthdays into the higher life. He suggests that many in these sad days of the war might also commemorate with the courage of faith those who have been emancipated by Christ, and who are living for ever in love enshrined, God's love and our love. It is indeed the privilege of all who are bereaved. On the first birthday this is what parents might say:

"Twelve months ago this day, you passed
To that high place God willed for you,
To that new work he called you to,
And life for us was overcast.

But when we think upon your joy
We cannot wish you back again,
We recognise the higher gain
To you in such employ.

Our love upreaches through the veils
To grace you in your high estate,
As daily we commemorate
Our joy in you that never fails.

We feel you nearer now than when,
Still with us, you were far away,
Nor did we know from day to day
If we should see your face again.

So now, for your fine loyalty
Unceasing thanks and praise we give;
Who dies for Him shall ever live,
Who lives for Him shall never die." *

Although we have the assurance that our
loved one is near us and with us and never away
from us; and although we are confident that he
is far better off amid the joys and transports of
heaven than the trials and tears of earth,

"Yet still, the mortal in us
Craves him mortally;
And nought shall stay
That craving till, on some bright day,
We too shall slip the clinging clay
And find him there awaiting us
Upon the heavenly way."

* Oxenham: *The Fiery Cross*, p. 104.

We will thus know our loved ones when we reach the golden shores. Heaven is a place of order and peace and not of confusion. If we never forget those who have gone on before; if every thought of them makes us tender, despite the passing of the years; if furthermore, they are thinking of us and praying for us, we can be sure that the welcome which they bear on their radiant faces will more than compensate for the drought which their departure created in our souls. It will be they themselves whom we shall meet and greet; and the beneficial changes which they have undergone will not prevent our recognising them. In a letter Charles Lamb referred to a friend of his youth, and wrote: "There are friendships which outlast a second generation. Old as I am getting, in his eyes I was still the child he knew me." This is a common experience and it helps us to understand how the interval of years need not interfere with recognitions in heaven, which is pre-eminently the place of adjustment, reconciliation, and reunion. A recent letter from the Front expresses this truth very comforting-ly. It was written to a father by his only son a week before he "went west." "You will only receive this letter in case God takes me away from this earth, and I want you to look upon it as a message from me when I am with God. I

feel now that I cannot die—how can I when my soul is so young, and when it belongs to God? He will still find work for me to do elsewhere, and I shall go on serving him, more nobly than I have done on earth, and shall wait confidently for the time when you will all rejoin me, one by one, in that land where our happiness shall be complete, because we shall be with Jesus. Please don't weep for me; and please don't weep for yourselves. God, I know, in his Fatherly love, and pity, and power, will cause you to understand that he can do no wrong, and what he wills is best. After all, everything we lose for Christ's sake is *real gain*, and none of us will ever be beyond the reach of his loving arm, even though we are for a time parted. I won't say more now. I pray that God will continue to surround each one of you with his love and goodness, as he will me, until the *great day of reunion*. Really, God has been so good to me, in giving you all to me, that I *cannot* regret any sacrifice he wishes me to make for him. Cheer O!"

This anticipation of reunion in peace and felicity is the gift of the living Christ. We thus have the assurance that in that blest abode there will be no more sorrow nor tears, no partings nor privations, no distractions nor delusions, no anxiety nor anguish, for the former

things have passed away. Let us then comfort one another with this gospel of life, which holds out to us so blessed a goal. And let us wait in the patience of faith, hope and love for the dawning of the morning when we shall enter into the joy of our Lord.

CHAPTER NINE: "CHRIST OR
CHAOS?"

CHAPTER NINE

“CHRIST OR CHAOS?”

WHEN Jesus asked the question, “What think ye of Christ?” it was not in an academic spirit as though he wished to open a theological discussion. The interests of scholarship were subordinated by him to the far deeper concerns of life. The controversies of the church have witnessed no end of hair-splitting and theory-spinning which have left the participants “in wandering mazes lost,” or with a scowl showing bitter enmity towards one another. We are accustomed to think of the Emperor Julian as an apostate. This is a needlessly severe criticism of one who in early youth was compelled to breathe the fevered atmosphere of monkish Christianity, with its crude austerities and ascetic piety, which did not in the least reflect the goodness and joy of the New Testament. He saw hypocrisy among scholars and state officials who professed Christianity when Constantine made it the State religion. He was also aware of the jealous wranglings among

Christian leaders and their followers. It is therefore not surprising that he revolted against a religion which presumably tolerated these sharp animosities; he then turned with satisfaction to the culture and refinement of Greek philosophy. When he ascended the throne he became the champion of paganism but he deservedly failed. We regret the influences which led to his wrong conclusions as to the character of Christianity, but we can sympathise with his situation. Ibsen gives a more impartial estimate of Julian in his drama "Emperor and Galilean." Looking upon his dead form Basil of Cæsarea exclaimed: "It dawns on me like a great and radiant light, that here lies a noble, shattered instrument of God. . . . Christ, Christ—how came it that thy people saw not thy manifest design? The Emperor Julian was a rod of chastisement,—not unto death, but unto resurrection." The Christians of the fourth century were so absorbed in selfish controversies that they lost sight of the major issues. We can therefore see the hand of God in raising Julian to bring the Christians to their senses and to mould a finer creed. So also can we think of Mohammed, whose violent preaching of the unity of God was a firm protest against the idolatries of Christians in the seventh century. May we not think of the present war in

the same light, and without necessarily defending it or its treacherous aggressors, regard it as a scourge of God, calling Christian peoples back to the essentials of life, and saying to them in the words of the ancient prophet: “Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea;” and in the plaintive notes of the world’s greatest prophet: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”* I take the liberty of interpreting Jerusalem to mean the nations of Christendom.

“If thou shouldst blot us out without a word,
Our stricken souls must say we had incurred
Just punishment.
Warnings we lacked not, warnings oft and clear,
But in our arrogance we gave no ear
To thine admonishment.
And yet,—and yet! O Lord, we humbly pray,—
Put back again Thy righteous Judgment Day!
Have patience with us yet a while, until
Through these our sufferings we learn Thy will.”†

* Isaiah 48:18; Luke 13:34 f.

† Oxenham: “*All’s Well!*” p. 150.

In the last analysis, this is a call to reckon with Jesus Christ. It is not an appeal to curiosity but to conscience. It is a summons to deep heart searching on the part of those who call themselves Christians. If Christ is the supreme teacher, whose estimates of the values of life are free from sacerdotal and non-essential accretions, and if he is considered to be without an equal anywhere, then are we following his guidance? If he is the unique ideal of humanity, whose penetrating vision of the holy God was realised by his perfect experience of the virtue of God, do we really acknowledge him in all our concerns, or do we think of him as a symbol of convenience? If he is the Saviour, who by his death on the Cross has brought redemption, have we accepted him to the extent that his influence impels us to recognise his authority in deciding industrial, social and national questions. If he is Lord and Master, because of what he accomplished through sacrifice on our best behalf, do we in sincerity and truth rejoice in submission to him and confess:

“We own thy sway, we hear thy call,
We test our lives by thine.”

“What think ye of Christ?” does not mean, what is your opinion of Christ, but, what is your attitude to him? The Christian then is

known by the practice of surrender to Christ; by confidence in the final triumph of Christ; by determination to go all the way with Christ; and by enthusiastic efforts to win every one for Christ. The final test of discipleship is measured by the heart and not by the head. "The remedy for all the sufferings of the modern brain is enlargement of heart." Hence the searching significance of the words of Jesus: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*"* Note the sentence in italics and ask whether we are really furnishing such a proof to the world. We have praised love in prose and poetry, and these panegyrics make excellent reading. It is now time for the church to practise love, so that its spirit shall permeate every class and nation and determine the programme for the future of humanity. Of far greater importance is the big motive than the new and modern methods. Let us discard the medicine man with his patent nostrums and make way for the prophetic man, with his vision of the wholeness of life, who declares that God is essential to free us from our desolation and bring us deliverance. The apostle knew how

* John 13:34f.

to maintain the right balance when he said: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure."*

Professor W. M. Ramsay deduces three principles in the Pauline philosophy of history.

They are (1) The divine alone is real: all else is error. (2) A society, or nation, is progressive in so far as it hears the divine voice: all else is degeneration. (3) All men and every human society can hear the divine voice; but they must co-operate ere the communication can take place.† The present unparalleled situation throughout the world verifies the truth of the apostle's conclusions. The remarkable advances of civilisation could not prevent its overthrow, and true progress will be impossible in the coming years without an adequate spiritual dynamic.

Sacrifice is one of the most remarkable facts of the war. The eagerness to enlist in one form or another of service has laid bare the undreamed-of latent possibilities enshrined within the human breast. It has made clear that the fires of divinity still burn on the altars of the heart, and that a spark has been kindled into a quickening flame. The lamp of sacrifice has

* Phil. 2:12 f.

† Ramsay: *The Cities of St. Paul*, p. 12 ff.

again been trimmed and it is shining with brightness. Let us confess that the failure of the church was due to the neglect of this lamp in its midst. How else can we explain the scandalous bickerings and belligerency of the denominations and their anæmic satisfaction with things as they were, so long as they were holding their own? When the lamp of sacrifice was burning bright and clear, there was joy and peace in the church, and it made converts from every condition of life, turning the wayward to the path of purity, cleansing society of its inhuman pollutions, and establishing the principles of justice and truth. But the light grew dim when there was little of the sacrifice of prayer and meditation, without which there can never be the sacrifice of kindness, tenderness and deeds of gracious ministering. In its absence a haughty spirit entered the church and its leaders presumed too much so that the church was left to itself and discarded by the world which urgently needed the efficacy of its sacramental ministry. The only way out of our dilemma is to restore the lamp of sacrifice to its rightful place and remove all obstructions, in order that the saint may be kept progressing in the way of holiness, and the sinner may be led to pardon and peace. To this end Christians must become more ambitious for the higher

things of life, when they would be able to realise the presence of God through fellowship with the Son of his love in the unfailing inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The old order will pass away only when the cross comes to its own. The cross proclaims the real worth of human life and discards the petty and fatal differences which have alienated men from one another and compelled them to cultivate a hostile attitude towards each other. Since it expresses the deep sympathy of God, we rejoice in what has been well called the divine democracy of the cross. It is worth recalling that one of the favourite hymns at the Front is "When I survey the wondrous cross." Many have written of a singular scene witnessed by them on more than one occasion. Amid the ruins of charred buildings, the wooden cross or the stone cross seems to have escaped the fires. It is symbolical of the situation to-day. Our keen anguish, and sore travail and broken hearts need the healing of the cross. By this we mean the efficacy of the deed of redemption performed by Jesus Christ.

Indeed, it is Christ himself that the troubled and distracted world most urgently needs. And mark you, it is the complete Christ who alone can satisfy. The partial Christ of our creeds and churches is not enough. It is the many-

sided Christ of the New Testament, who wonderfully appeals to all classes of people by the charm of his character, the sensitiveness of his sympathy, the joy of his pardon, the blessedness of his bounty and the peace of his presence. This is the Christ who not only holds up high and exacting standards of duty but who also offers the fullest and most enriching help. He is the Christ of history, as genuine as any of the splendid personalities who has left his stamp on the life of men, only he has done it more thoroughly. He is also the Christ of experience, the living one, who abideth for evermore, and who is able to save unto the uttermost, to liberate to the fullest, and to empower in the highest, for the sacramental service of mankind. There is something in the personality of Jesus Christ which belongs to every age and clime. It is his unity with God and with man which leads us to respond to him, whose appeal is "no mere demand which he makes of men standing above them, but rather an inspiration which he gives to men standing among them." It is "that extraordinary interfusion of himself with all his words, that entwining of his personality with all his truth, which issues in this, that his commands are invitations, his imperatives entreaties, his severities the sanctities of sacrifice, which no one knowing him would wish

away.”* We thus think of him as the all-comprehending Christ of catholic vision and generous sympathies, who realises and completes the imperfect ideals and achievements of the race. How radically different is the cosmopolitanism of Christ to the arrogant provincialism of his disciples of the first century as well as of the twentieth century. Our failure to understand and receive the vision of the whole explains the shortcomings of the church. “Quite as much money is wasted in preaching the gospel as in philanthropy or charity—wasted not for lack of high intention and deep devotion, but for lack of any large horizon, or knowledge of what others are doing, any division of labour and conservation of effort.”† Our hymns are more catholic than our creeds, for the reason that the heart is more reliable and more profound in its intuitions and interests than is the head. In our praise we confess that Christ is the true and only centre of Christianity and the luminous light, whose wholesome rays extend over an increasing area of the world. Thus with the Roman Catholic we sing:

“Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills the breast”;

* Cameron: *The Renascence of Jesus*, p. 311 ff.

† Faunce: *The New Horizon of State and Church*, p. 42.

with the Moravian:

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress";

with the Episcopalian:

"Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if thou be near";

with the Baptist:

"I know that my Redeemer lives;
What joy the blest assurance gives";

with the Presbyterian:

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Come unto me and rest'";

with the Lutheran:

"My Jesus as thou wilt:
O may thy will be mine";

with the Congregationalist:

"O Master, let me walk with thee
In lowly paths of service free";

with the Methodist:

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly";

with the Quaker:

"O Lord and Master of us all,
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own thy sway, we hear thy call,
We test our lives by thine."

This testimony of the hymnal is being endorsed in a remarkable way on the bloody fields of battle. One of the chaplains recently wrote: "Out yonder I have seen a crowded hut, or a tent filled to overflowing, with no thought of church or creed or ritual, but swayed, as the wheat is swayed by the breath of the ripening autumn, by the one great thought of him who died. I have seen the Catholic, with his crucifix in his hands, beside the Anglican, the Methodist, the Presbyterian, and the man of no church, rapt in the thought of the Comrade of the way of sacrifice and of his wounding for the souls of men. Chaplains of all the churches worked together, came into conference together, and became absorbed in the one purpose of winning men's hearts for God, their own hearts having been surrendered to the Highest, their prejudices burned to ashes in the fire of such great service.'"* The war is surely breaking the artificial walls erected by custom and conventionalism, and we are persuaded that the coming day will be one of triumph for the Christianity of Christ. Let us see in this the call and recall of our Saviour, and get ready after the war to realise the unity in Christ on a worldwide scale.

* Watt: *The Heart of a Soldier*, p. 241 f.

Thus, "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."*

What makes this truth so pressing and impressive is the fact that Jesus Christ has brought the full vision of God, which is the vision of truth, goodness and beauty. If our present miseries are manifestly due to our misguided and mistaken efforts to eliminate God; and if our knowledge of him in adequate measure depends on Christ; then, it is to our advantage that we zealously undertake to understand the mind of Christ, and to guide all our affairs by what we learn from him. The words of the prophet concerning the Servant of Jehovah contain in outline the program of Christianity:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
For he has consecrated me to preach good news to the poor,
He has sent me to proclaim release to captives,
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set free those who have been crushed by oppression
To proclaim the year when the Lord will show favour."†

Jesus quoted this passage at the very beginning of his beneficent ministry and declared: "To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears." This message is so captivating because it deals with the fundamental fact

* Isaiah 61:1 f.

† Luke 4:18 ff. Cf. Isaiah 61:1 ff. This excellent rendering is from *The Shorter Bible: The New Testament* (Scribner's).

of our temper, attitude, motive and purpose. Read between the lines and you find here an implication of economic and industrial unrest, of commercial and social discord, of individual and national shortcomings, which could be removed only by Christ. Jesus did not introduce any sumptuary legislation, but he set love at the heart of life, satisfied that if this eternal principle would be given control the right adjustments could be made. "The present age is moved with thoughts beyond the reach of its powers; great aspirations for the well-being of the people and high ideals of social welfare flash across its mind, to be followed again by thicker darkness. There is hardly any limit to its despair or hope. It has far larger faith in the destiny of man than any of its predecessors, and yet it is *sure* of hardly anything—except that the ancient rules of human life are false."*

We are therefore confronted by two alternatives. One is to accept the spiritual idealism of Jesus, which secures for us an outlet for the healing forces of liberty, righteousness and fraternity. The other is to choose materialism, after the fashion of clay-eaters, and go round

* Jones: *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, p. 60.

in a circle with bleared vision, seared conscience and vitiated deeds. One of our leaders, in emphasising the teaching function of the modern church, urges that we should revise our religious and ethical vocabulary by giving it a new content and putting upon each word the clear image and superscription of Jesus. "And besides the widespread use of religious words in a subchristian sense, we have to face the fact that generally men breathe a godless atmosphere and that ninety-nine per cent of life's interests are thought of by supposedly Christian people with no reference to Christ."* If we believe that the present tragedy, in the last analysis, is due to the side-tracking of Jesus, let us see to it that when the propositions for peace are submitted, the decisions shall be made with due deference to the mind and spirit of Jesus Christ. Surely his character offers to all the best ideal, and his cross is the finest symbol of the deepest and richest meaning of life. If he is set aside, the flood-gates will again be opened for passion, pride and prejudice with their infamous progeny, which shall come to birth and grow for the defamation and damnation of life. If we refuse the primacy to Christ, who brings light, life and love, it is because we prefer chaos with its darkness, disorder and desolation.

* Coffin: *In a Day of Social Rebuilding*, p. 110.

And back of it is our insensate worship of self which is the prolific generator of idolatry, infamy and iniquity in their hydra-headed monstrous and criminal forms. If on the other hand we sincerely welcome Christ, it means that he shall be honored in the market-place and the forum, in the council chamber of diplomats and in the assembly of ecclesiastics, in the home and in the counting-house, in the cottage and in the palace. Dr. Felix Adler in his latest volume, which is noteworthy for what it contains and what it omits, refers to some of the false hopes of civilisation. Facilities of intercourse have not produced friendly relations between peoples, as witness the incessant conflicts between the nations of Central Europe. Science, art and scholarship have, to be sure, become internationalised, but this fact did not prevent the scientists and scholars of the belligerent nations from being swept away by the war passion, who, "in their utterance have even carried animosity to greater lengths, expressing it in language calculated to wound more deeply and to leave more permanent scars."* The commercial mind which really rules the world,

* The interested reader is directed to a volume: *Hurrah and Hallelujah* by J. P. Bang, for a pathetic and tragic defence of the war by German leaders who were held in the highest honour outside their land, but who have now confiscated their place among the spiritual leaders of the world.

ignores geographical and political boundaries only when it serves its interest to enter into negotiations, which have however been inspired by the selfish passion of gain. This is not always apparent because a sinister sophistry has veiled the professions that the extension of trade spreads the benefits of civilisation. “Even the humane treatment of the natives, where it is humane, resembles somewhat too unpleasantly the fattening of the calf prior to its consumption by the owner.”* We must look elsewhere for hope and fruition; and here we part company with Dr. Adler, whose suggested remedy is ineffective to cure the modern disease which he has so skilfully diagnosed. Bernard Shaw in his cynical style asked the timely question: “Why not give Christianity a trial?” And lest he be misunderstood he went on to explain “I am no more a Christian than Pilate was, and yet I am ready to admit that after contemplating the world and human nature for nearly sixty years, I see no way out of the world’s misery but the way which would have been found by Christ’s will if he had undertaken the work of a modern practical statesman.”

It is in this direction that we must look for deliverance. Christ exercises his sway not by the assertion of force but by the appeal of

* Adler: *An Ethical Philosophy of Life*, p. 333 ff.

service. He awakens the better nature in us by the vitalising impact of his tenderness and goodness. He knows nothing of the symbols of earthly potentates, whose sceptres have been at best but broken reeds. It is the magnetic Christ who speaks: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." The principle of *feudalism* which has been dominant in the world has failed because it was supported by intolerable discriminations in favour of birth and wealth. This is the spirit of chaos which is now writhing for life but which shall be destroyed. The other is the principle of *fellowship* which has struggled hard for recognition in all the centuries, and among whose advocates are martyrs, saints and seers, both in the church and outside of it. This is the spirit of Christ for which a worn-out humanity has long been waiting with wistful gaze and hungry heart and outstretched hands. He is at last about to come to his own. We rejoice in this assurance, and we salute him with jubilation as we look out of our darkness, which is passing away, to the dawning day, which shall see the triumph of our Lord and Master o'er all the earth.

"Surely he cometh, and a thousand voices
Call to the saints, and to the deaf are dumb;
Surely he cometh, and the earth rejoices
Glad in his coming who hath sworn, I come.

This hath he done and shall we not adore him?

This shall he do and can we still despair?

Come let us quickly fling ourselves before him,

Cast at his feet the burthen of our care.

Flash from our eyes the glow of our thanksgiving,

Glad and regretful, confident and calm,

Then thro' all life and what is after living

Thrill to the tireless music of a psalm.

Yea thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning

He shall suffice me, for he hath sufficed:

Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,

Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ." *

* Myers: *Saint Paul*, p. 52 f.

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